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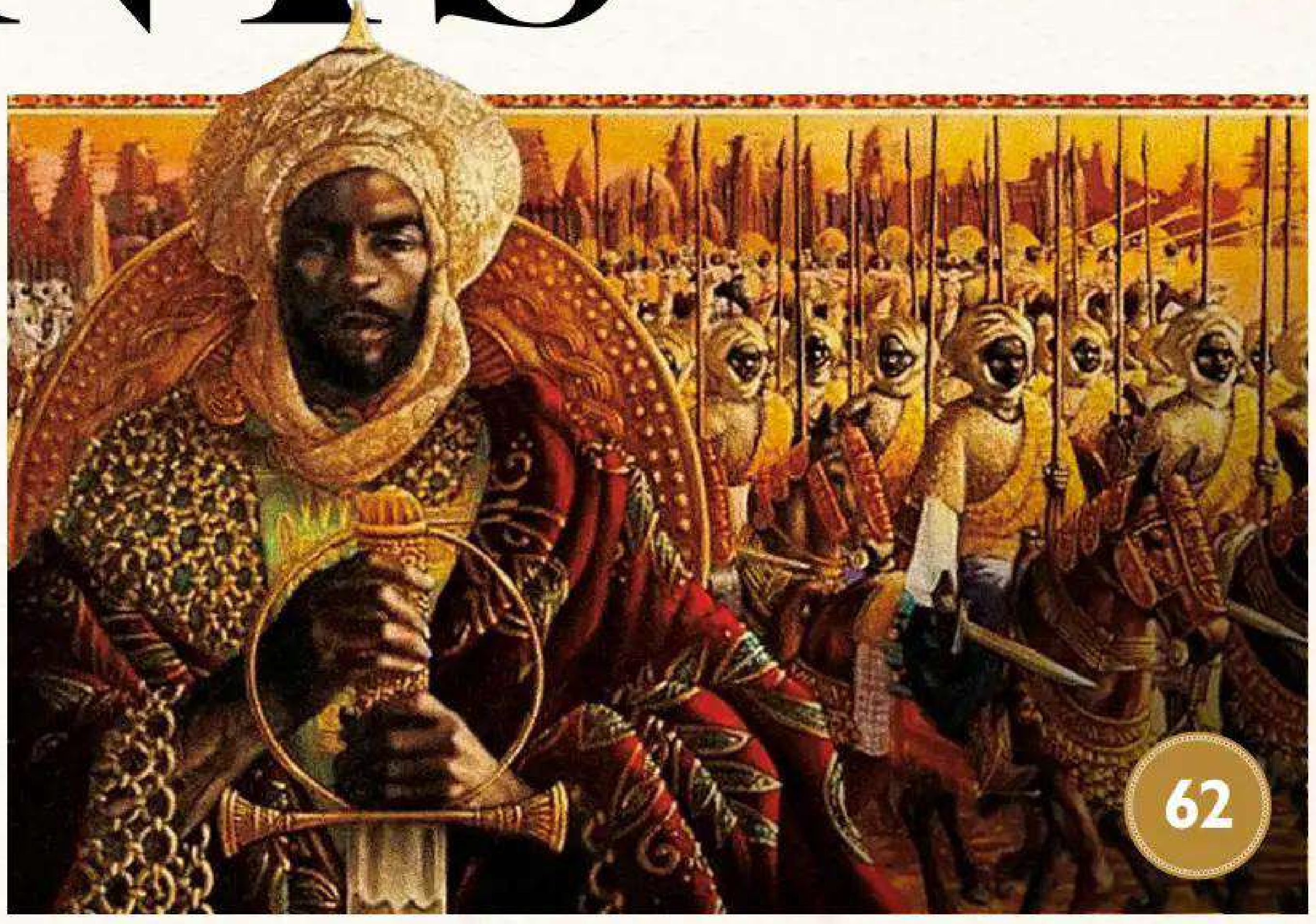

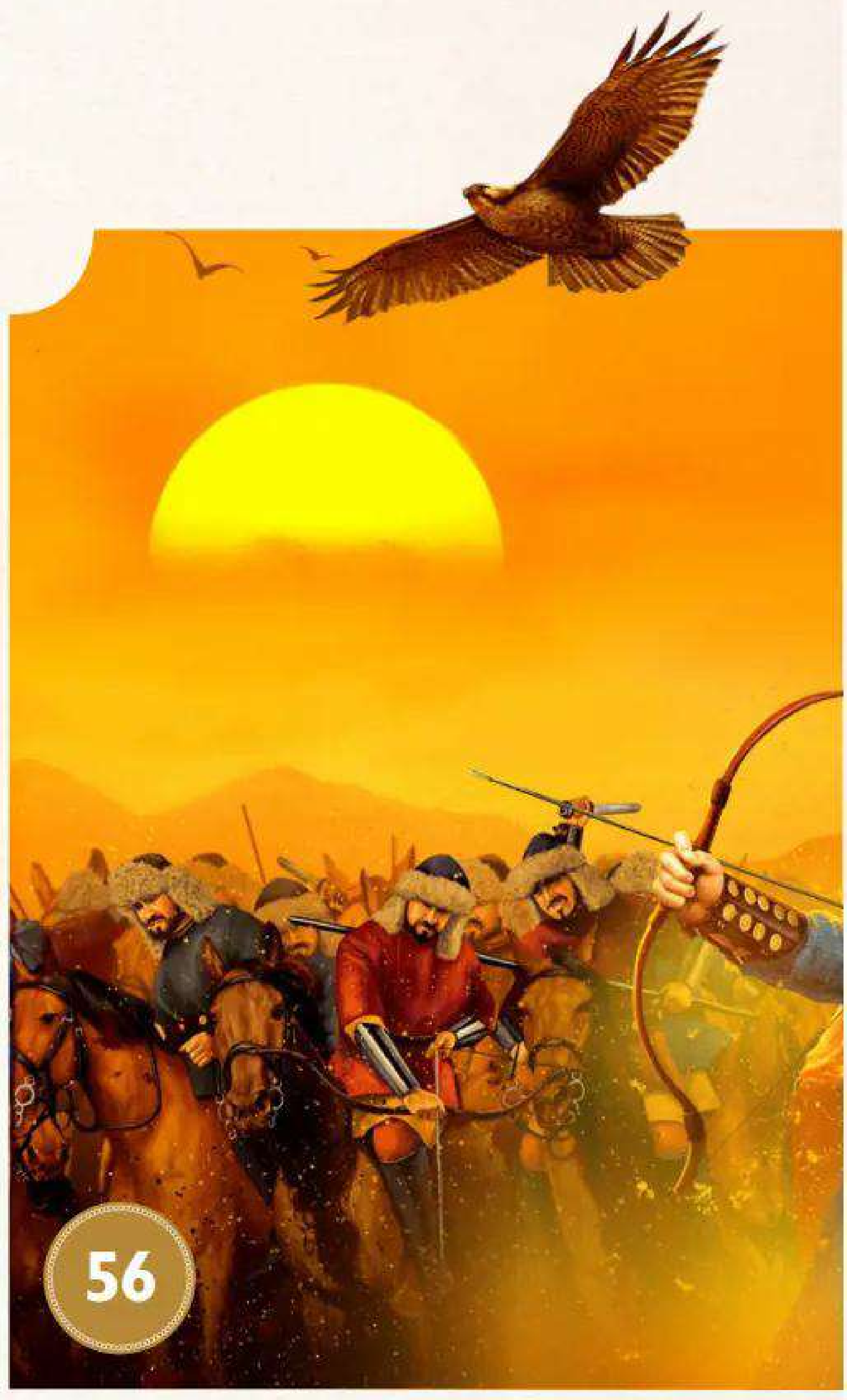

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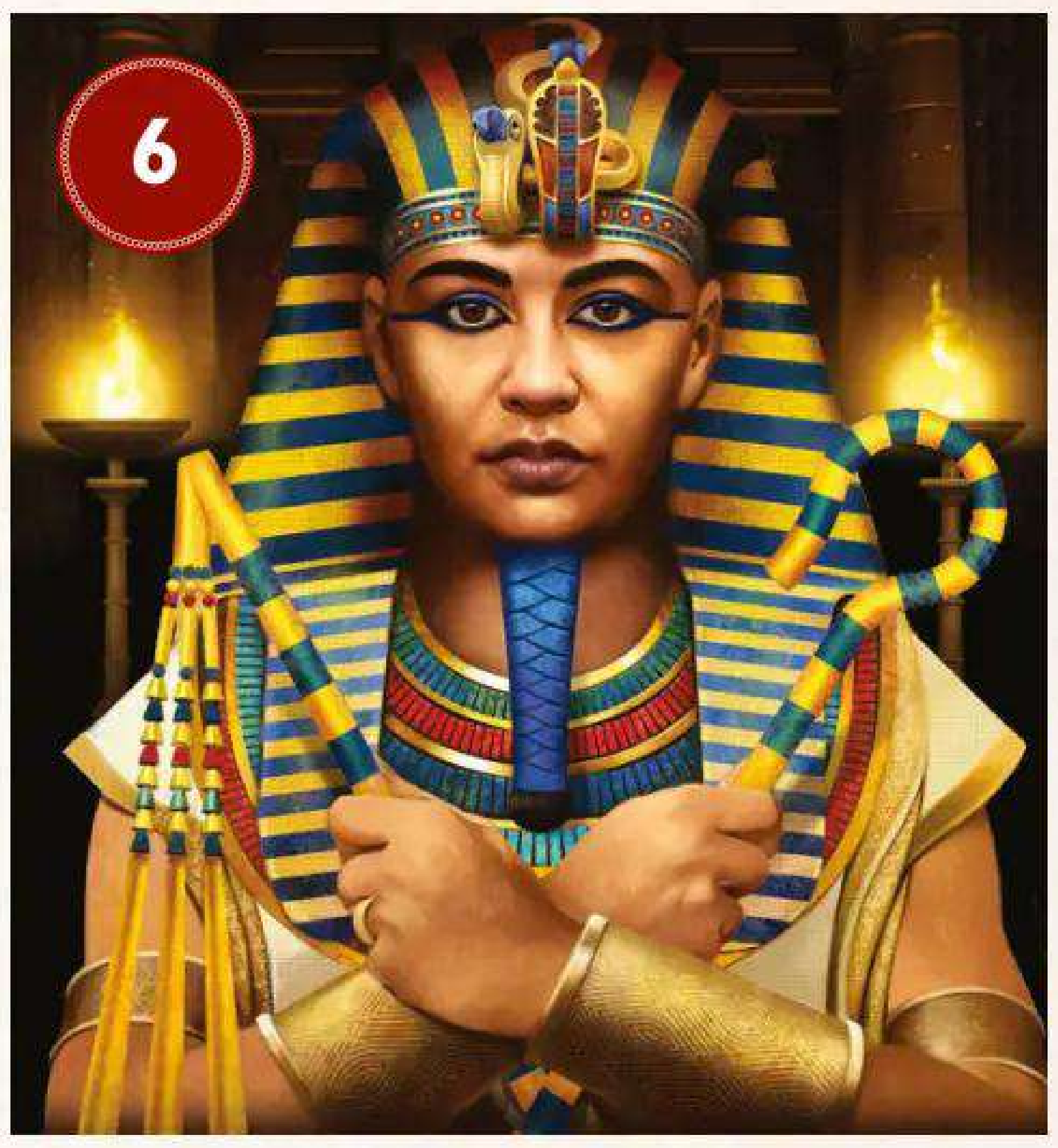

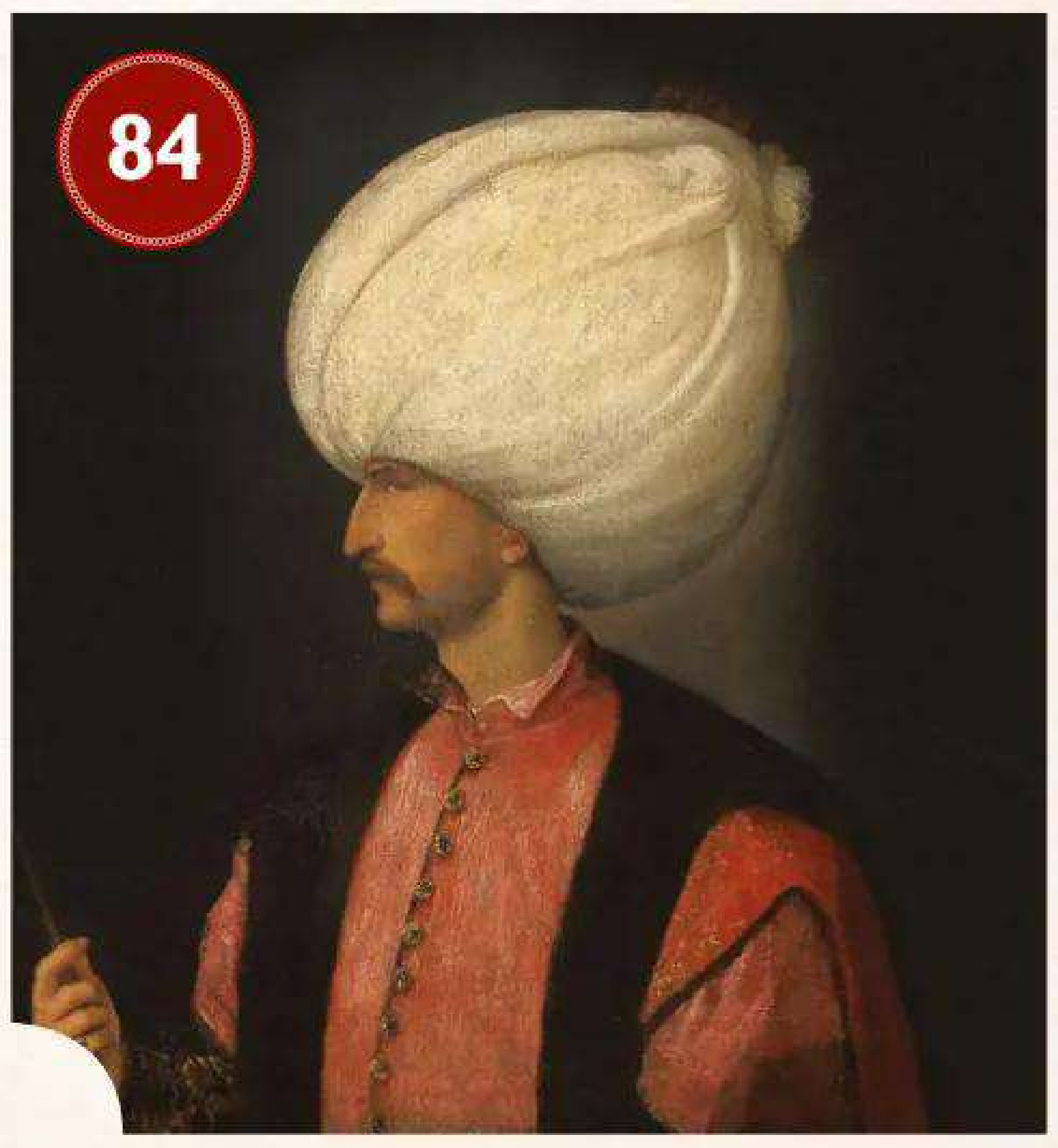

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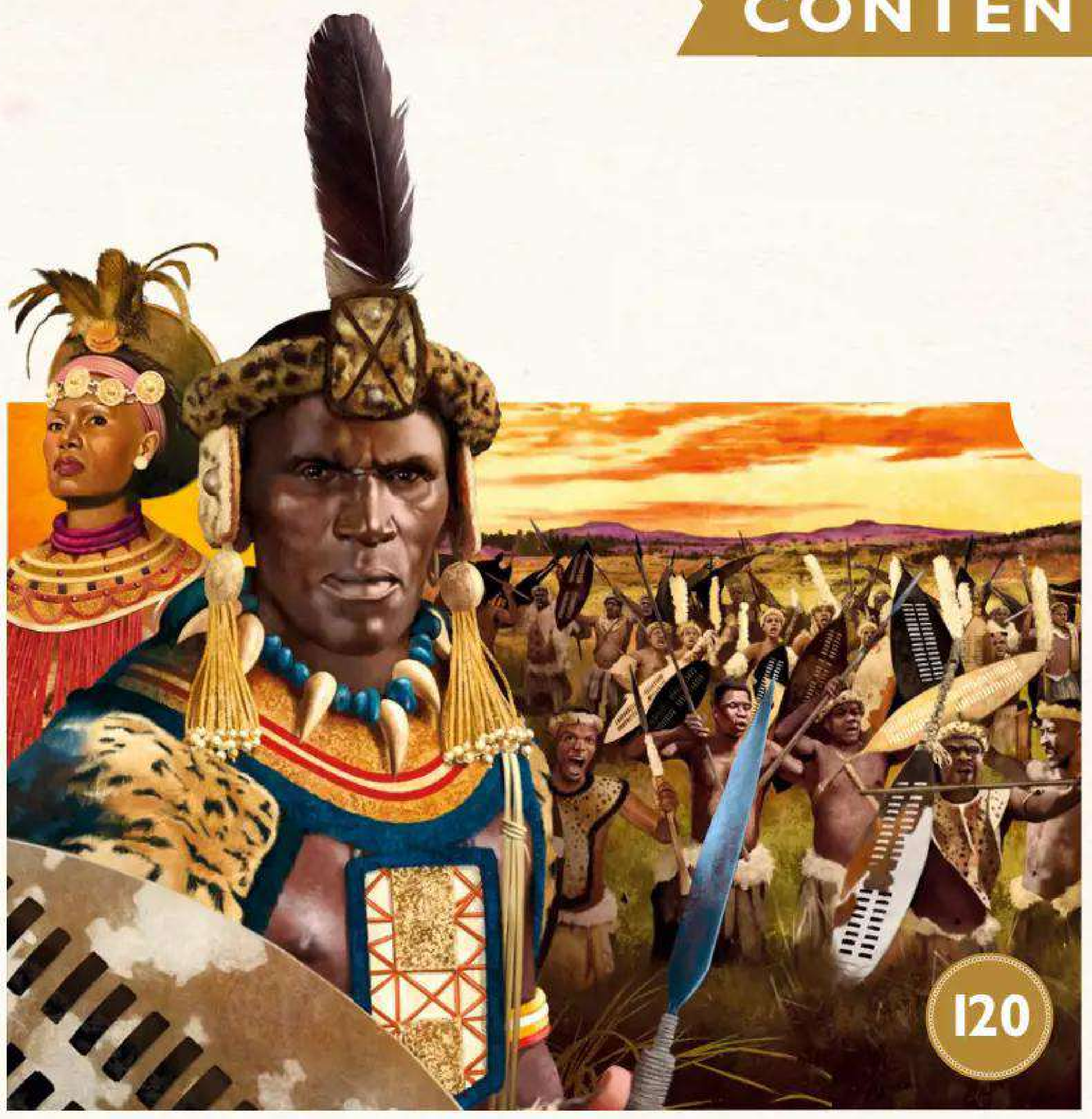

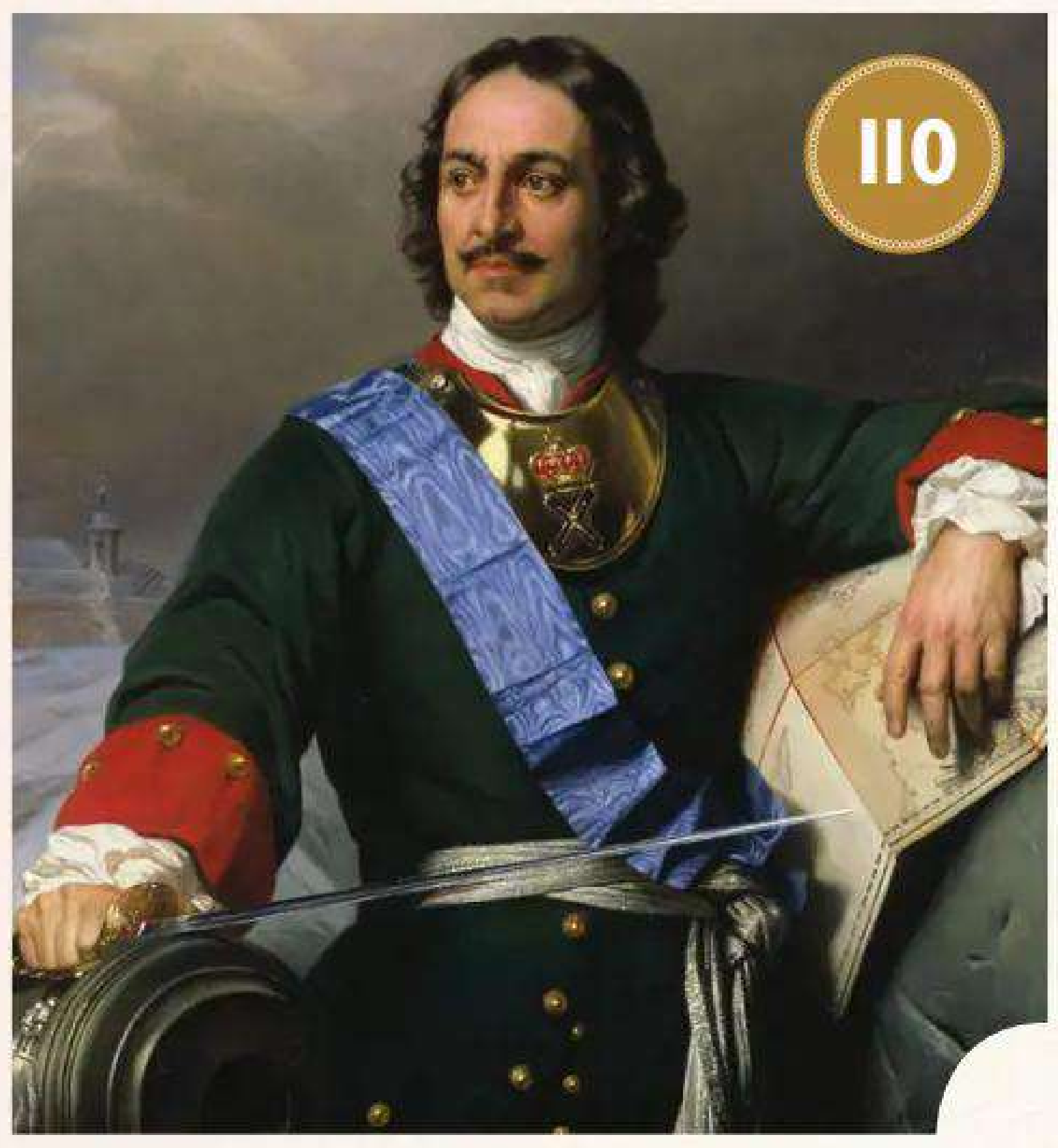

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> *"Christophe forged a kingdom by force of personality"*

TUTANK

HAMUN

How Egypt's legendary boy king came to power and who was really in control

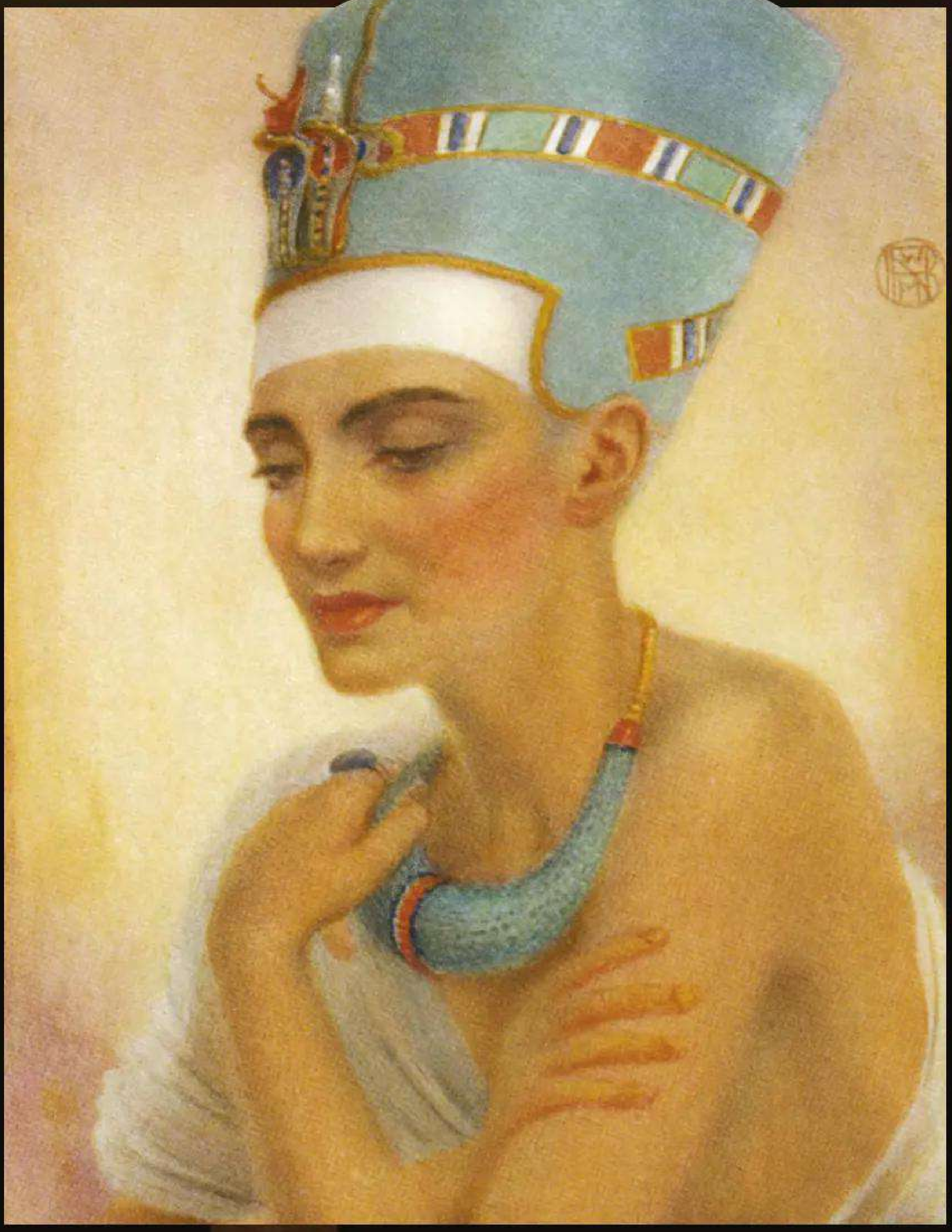
Words **Garry J Shaw**

EXPERT BIO

GARRY J SHAW

Garry Shaw is an author and journalist covering archaeology, history and world heritage. He has a PhD in Egyptology, and his book, *The Story of Tutankhamun: An Intimate Life of the Boy Who Became King*, is published by Yale University Press.

Illustration Joe Cummings **Image** Garry J Shaw



ABOVE Nefertiti was not Tutankhamun's birth mother, but would have been an important influence on his life

BELOW Tutankhamun's Restoration Stele describes how the king restored the temples and brought Egypt back to a state of order after a time when the gods had abandoned the country

Tutankhamun – originally called Tutankhaten – was born around 1329 BCE. Egypt was in a great upheaval because his father, King Akhenaten, had reformed the country's millennia-old traditions. With Queen Nefertiti, he had turned his back on the gods in favour of an obscure deity – the Aten, or sun disc. As Akhenaten's reign progressed, the god Amun, king of the gods, was targeted for attacks. The king's followers smashed Amun's statues across Egypt and scratched away his name from monuments. Amun represented all that was hidden, so Akhenaten perhaps regarded him as the antithesis of the Aten's all-encompassing, life-giving light.

As the years passed, other gods were attacked too. To symbolise Egypt's new beginning, Akhenaten moved the royal court to a newly built city in the desert, which he called Akhetaten – the Horizon of the Aten – today called Amarna.

With this dramatic shift in religious devotion, Egypt's art style changed too. Directed by the king, the Amarna artists produced statues and carvings quite unlike any that came before or after him. Despite wearing the traditional regalia of a pharaoh, Akhenaten was carved with a round belly and spindly legs and arms – far from the youthful, muscular and fit bodies that pharaohs typically chose for their official art. Temples changed too. Gone were their dark and mysterious sanctuaries, where the gods' statues stood in shrines, awaiting gifts and praise from priests. Temples to the Aten were open to the sky, embracing the sun's rays, which reached down to touch hundreds of offering tables laden with food and drink. This was the new Egypt in which Tutankhamun grew up.

Tutankhamun was the son of Akhenaten and one of the king's sisters. He spent his earliest years with his wet nurse, Maia, who later had a tomb built for herself at the ancient necropolis of Saqqara. Around age four, while Amarna remained under construction, Tutankhamun began his education. One of his tutors was a man named Sennedjem who, among his duties, taught the young boy to ride chariots, perhaps near the city of Akhmim where the tutor would eventually be buried. Tutankhamun carried his love of riding into his teenage years.

The young prince also learned how to read and write. He owned scribal equipment that bore his name and dipped his red ink-covered pen into one water pot so often that the pot became stained. If he followed the typical curriculum of a scribal student, Tutankhamun first studied the cursive script hieratic, used in administration and correspondence, before moving on to the sacred hieroglyphs found on the walls of tombs and temples. With his tutors' guidance, he would have spent a great deal of time copying and recopying set texts, including already ancient classics such as *The Tale of Sinuhe*, about a courtier who fled to the Levant, and wisdom texts attributed to the great kings of the past.

Certain teachings perhaps came directly from Akhenaten. The king saw himself as a teacher to his courtiers and composed hymns to the Aten, which were copied onto their tomb walls. As a child, Tutankhamun must have been heavily influenced by his father's new vision for Egypt. He would have accepted the closure of the ancient temples and the destruction of divine statues as normal.

> *"As a child, Tutankhamun must have been heavily influenced by his father's new vision for Egypt"*

But this new world didn't last. Akhenaten died after 17 years as king, plunging his religious experiment into uncertainty. Over the years, multiple tragedies had struck the royal family. Three of Tutankhamun's half-sisters had died, as had his grandmother, Queen Tiye, plus the obscure co-regent Smenkhkare and a secondary queen named Kiya. It isn't clear how they died, but during this time plague was running rampant around the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. Amarna was not immune, particularly as people from across the Egyptians' known world visited the city.

With Akhenaten dead, the throne seems to have passed to Queen Nefertiti, ruling as King Neferneferuaten. Her reign became a time of transition. Perhaps under pressure from more traditionally-minded nobles, she allowed the old gods to regain their positions. The Aten remained their equal, however, and the court continued to operate from Amarna. All around Tutankhamun, a different Egypt re-emerged – a place of deep traditions that had existed for thousands of years. He was now expected to worship gods that had been dismissed in Akhenaten's day. Abandoned rituals reappeared. Prayers unspoken for nearly 20 years were uttered again. It must have been a confusing time – even more so, when, after only three years as king, Neferneferuaten died. At just ten years old, the crown fell to Tutankhamun. During his coronation ceremony, the royal ka, or spirit of kingship, entered his body and transformed him from a prince into a pharaoh.

THE COURT

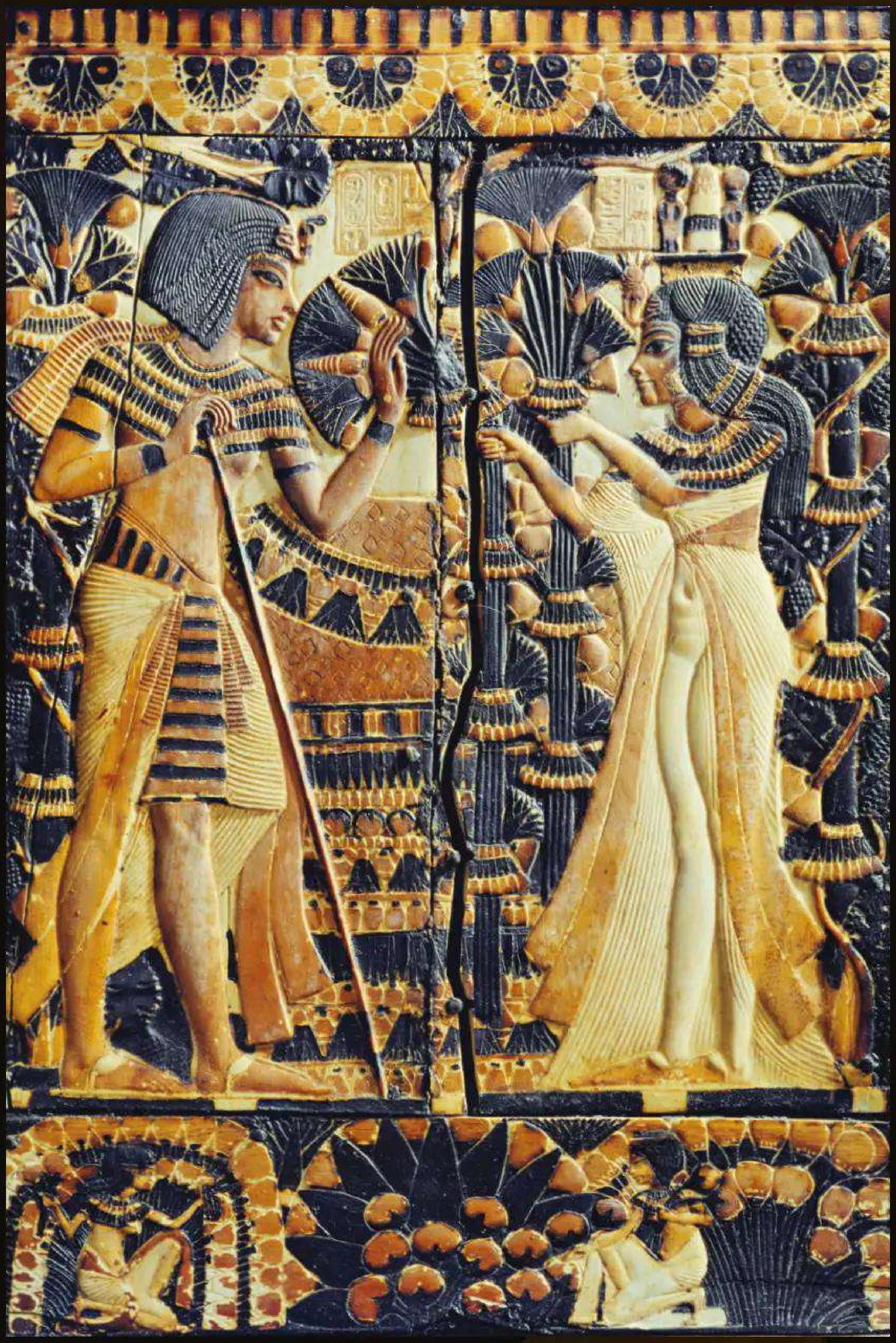
As king, Tutankhamun was suddenly thrust into a world of politics and power. Each day, he presided over a meeting with his highest courtiers. For these occasions, Tutankhamun held a child-size crook and flail, symbols of his divine office, and wore the false beard of kings, wrapped with wire around his ears. A yellow and blue striped nemes headdress sat on his head. His feet, shod in sandals, perched on a footrest decorated with pictures of Egypt's enemies. He watched the vizier and other courtiers enter the audience hall and pay their respects. They updated him on the condition of Egypt and together discussed the important matters of the day. It's impossible to know how much interest the young king had in what they said, but tradition dictated that he be present at such meetings – any deviation from correct order, or maat to the Egyptians, brought about chaos – and over recent years the country had experienced enough of that.

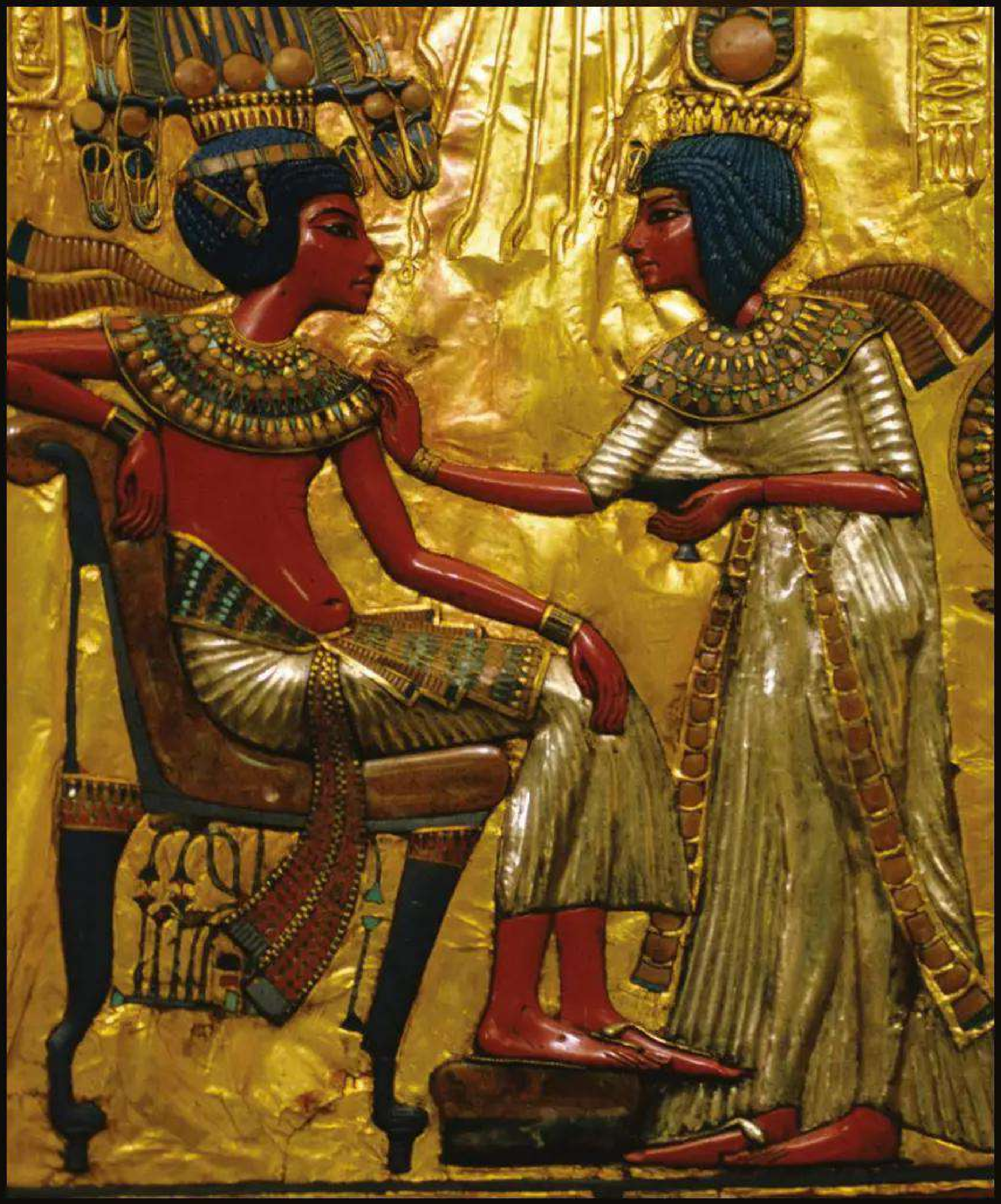
Usually, when a prince became king at a young age, the dowager queen managed affairs. But with Queen Tiye and Queen Nefertiti dead – and seemingly Tutankhamun's mother too – there was no senior family member to guide him. Those closest to Tutankhamun and in a position to influence his thinking were his wife Ankhesenamun; his tutors, perhaps still including Sennedjem; and the highest court nobles, many still serving from the time of his father. First among these courtiers was Horemheb – a man called Paatenemheb under Akhenaten. The leader of Egypt's armies, he now gained the title of king's deputy, which gave him the power to oversee every government department – this included the palace administration and, by extension, control over Tutankhamun's daily life. Next, there was Aye, whose sister had earlier married King Amenhotep III, bringing them into the royal family's circle. He acted as a close royal advisor and accompanied the king in his daily duties. Finally, there was the chief treasurer Maya, who managed the kingdom's assets. These three men were the major influences on Tutankhamun from his first days on the throne.

THE ROYAL FAMILY

By the time of his coronation, Tutankhamun had married one of his half-sisters – a daughter of Nefertiti and Akhenaten, called Ankhesenamun, who was probably around a year older than him. As queen, she represented the female side of kingship and joined Tutankhamun during ceremonies, audiences and rituals. Over the course of their marriage, they twice tried to have children, but both pregnancies ended in loss. Their stillborn daughters were mummified and eventually buried in Tutankhamun's tomb.

A few years into his reign, Tutankhamun brought the bodies of his family from Amarna to the Valley of the Kings in Luxor for reburial. Without a reason to exist, Amarna would soon be reclaimed by the desert sands. He commanded that his grandmother, Queen Tiye, be interred with her husband, King Amenhotep III, though the gilded wooden frame that had surrounded her sarcophagus at Amarna was kept in a small, undecorated tomb, now known as KV 55 (KV standing for King's Valley). Tiye and Tutankhamun's lives only briefly overlapped, but she must have been important to him, for he kept a lock of her hair in a small coffin among his own possessions. KV 55 also became the final resting place of Akhenaten – if indeed, the skeleton within is actually him. He was placed in a repurposed coffin, originally made for Queen Kiya, surrounded by other objects from Amarna. Tutankhamun had abandoned his father's teachings and now represented Egypt's return to tradition, but he must have still felt responsible for ensuring his heretic father's afterlife well-being.

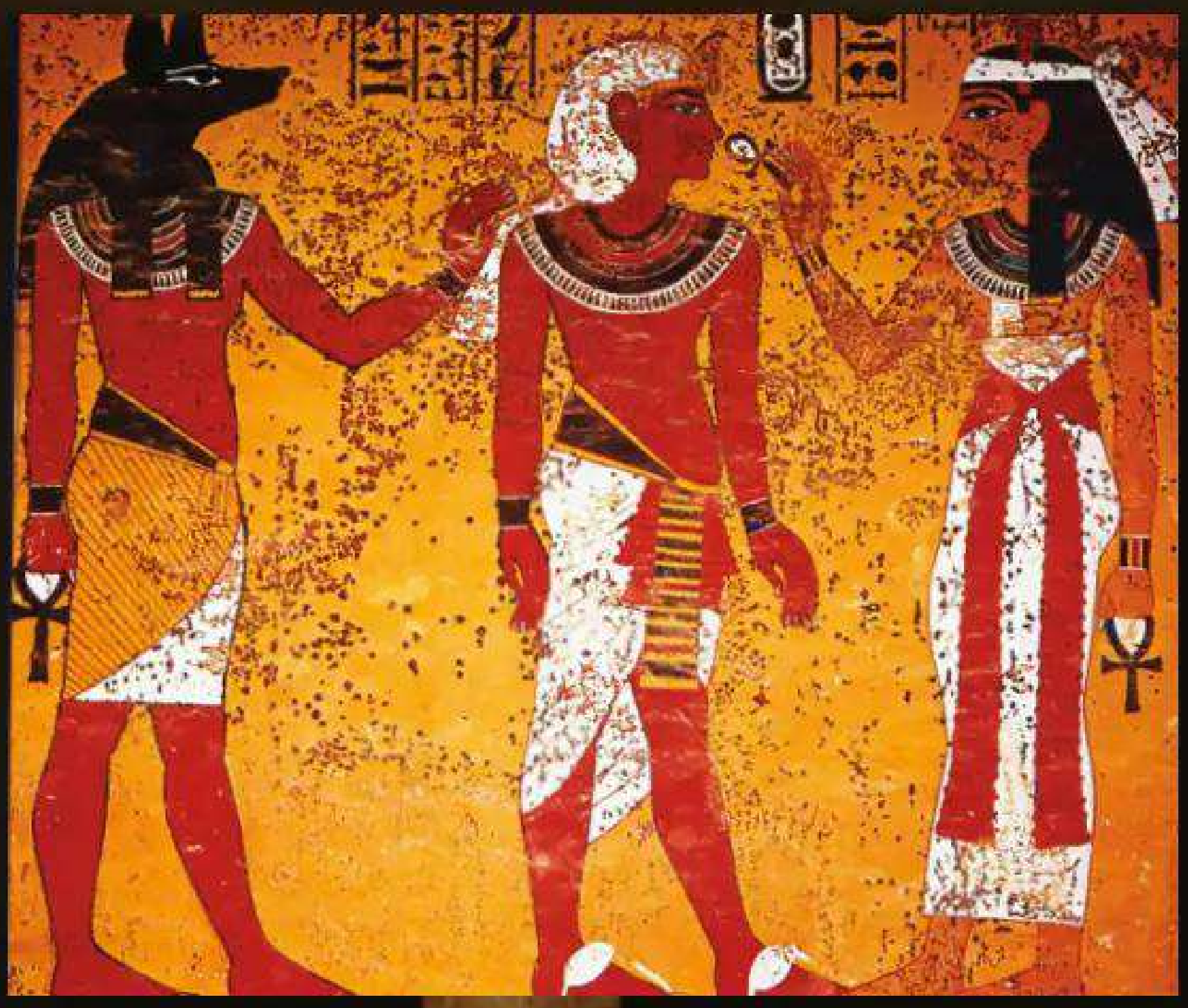


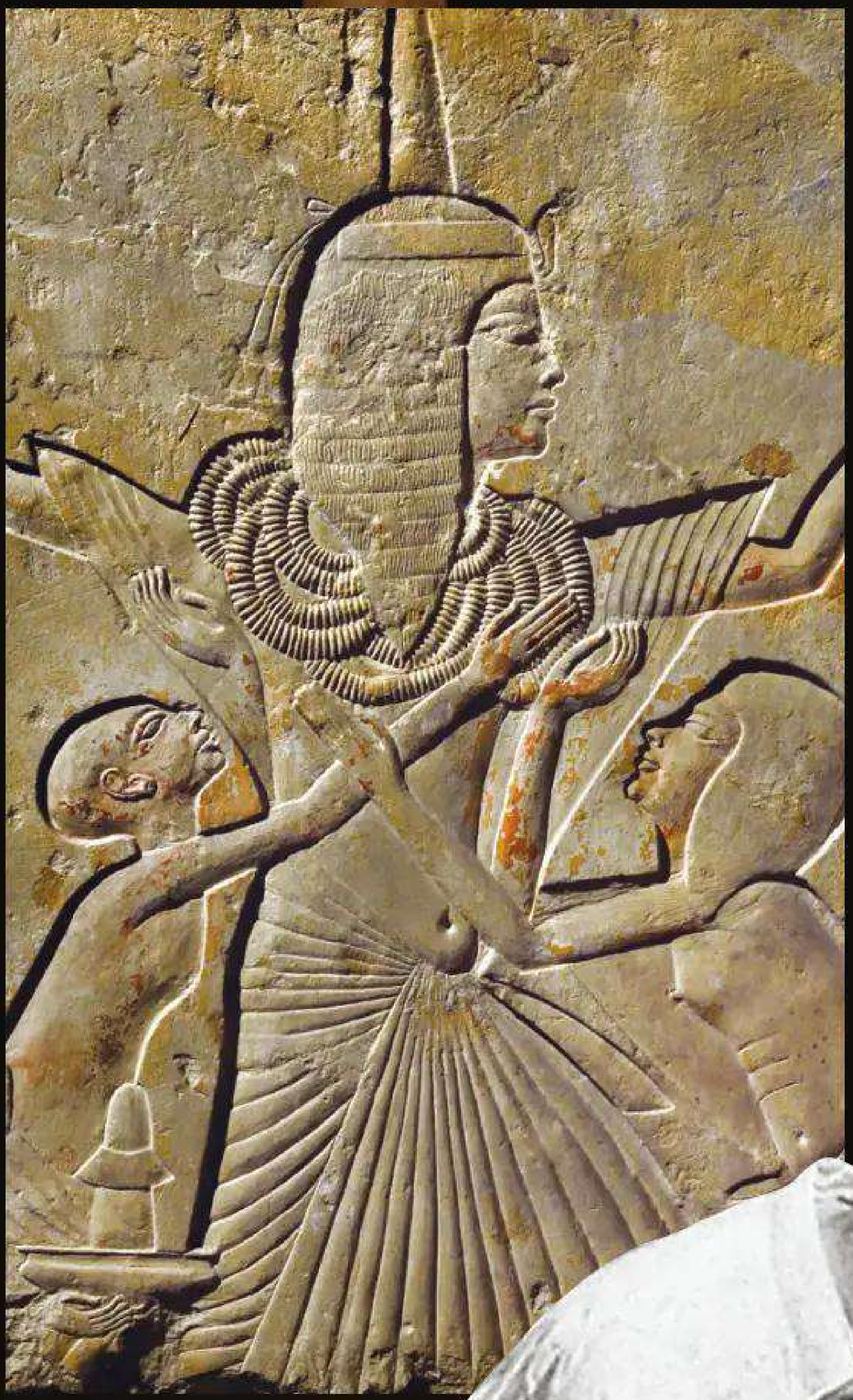


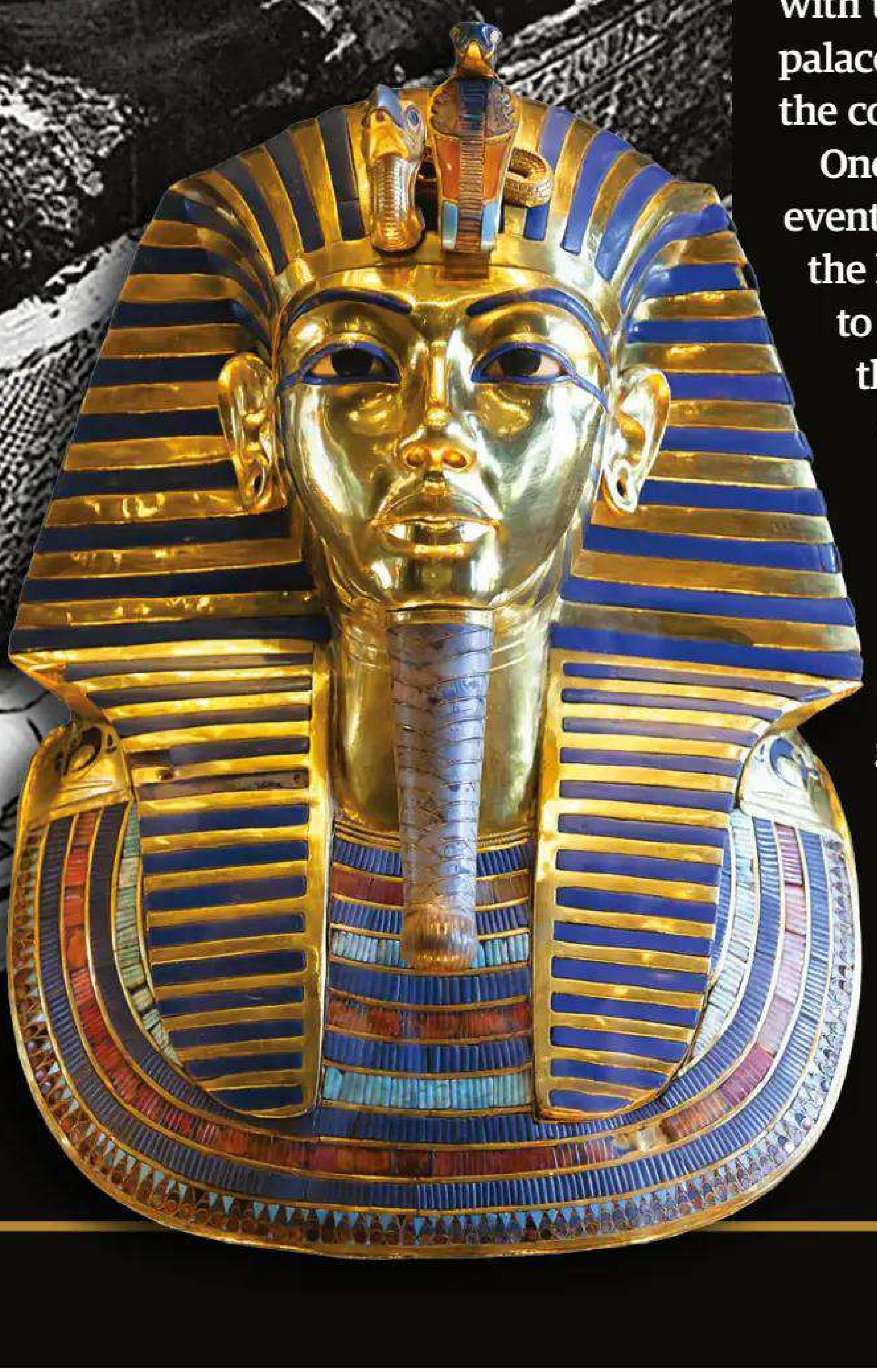
TOP A painted ivory plaque from the tomb of Tutankhamun, showing the young king using his cane

ABOVE Some detail from the back of Tutankhamun's thrown, showing the king with his queen

Images Alamy







LEFT This mural from Tutankhamun's burial chamber shows him with the gods Anubis (left) and Hathor (right)

BELOW LEFT General Horemheb was Egypt's most powerful courtier under Tutankhamun. Here, he receives gifts from the king as reward for his excellent work

BOTTOM The rediscovery of Tutankhamun's tomb brought his name back to life

BOTTOM-INSET Tutankhamun's death mask covered the head of his mummy. With the gold skin of a god, the king wears the striped nemes headdress and a false beard associated with divinity

THE RESTORATION

Although the royal court had abandoned Amarna for the traditional royal city of Memphis, Akhenaten's legacy was still found everywhere. The temples of the gods remained neglected across Egypt. As the king, Tutankhamun had to address this problem – either of his own volition or, more likely given his young age and education in the Amarna ways, at the suggestion of his courtiers. To begin with, Tutankhamun commissioned an inscription that described Egypt's woeful state. The inscription explained that the temples were in ruin, and the gods had abandoned the country and Egypt's armies failed when sent abroad to fight. Tutankhamun had fixed all of this, it continued. The young king had rebuilt the temples and pleased the gods. Egypt had returned to a state of order. In reality, none of this had happened yet, but in ancient Egypt, the written word had magical power – writing something down made it a reality. Craftsmen dutifully carved the text into stone stelae and erected them at temples across the country, including at the Temple of Amun at Karnak – the home of Akhenaten's most hated god. Like other royal stelae, its content was probably read aloud to crowds on festival occasions, spreading the word of Tutankhamun's good deeds.

With this statement of intent 'published', craftsmen mobilised across Egypt to restore what had been broken or destroyed. Workshops produced carvings of gods, each bearing the face of Tutankhamun. It was traditional for divine statues produced under a king to bear his idealised portrait and for this to change over the years. What wasn't normal was the sheer number of statues that had to be carved – Akhenaten's vandals had been thorough. Statues acted as bodies for the gods' divine forces to inhabit when receiving offerings, for which, in return, they ensured Egypt's success. By destroying these vessels, Akhenaten had cut off one of their ways of interacting with humanity. Egypt's most important divine statues were kept in the temple sanctuaries but other, larger statues populated the temple enclosures too. These also bore Tutankhamun's face, including one of the god Khonsu, the young son of Amun, at Karnak. With this statue, Tutankhamun presented himself as a son of the king of the gods and showed that he had fully turned his back on his father's teachings.

RITUALS & FESTIVALS

One of Tutankhamun's most important duties was leading religious festivals. As pharaoh – a role that made him an intermediary between people and the gods – this was not something that he could avoid because of his youth. Being a semi-divine being came with obligations. Although high priests usually made divine offerings in the temples, certain royal festivals required the king's presence. Consequently, pharaohs travelled frequently, moving with the court and their servants to palaces or temporary lodgings across the country.

One of Egypt's most important annual events was the Opet Festival, in which the king travelled from Karnak Temple to Luxor Temple, accompanied by the gods Amun, Mut and Khonsu, to re-energise his royal ka – the spirit of kingship. Luxor Temple held a special significance to Tutankhamun. The construction of its Colonnade Hall had begun under his grandfather, King Amenhotep III, but it had been abandoned by Akhenaten. Tutankhamun – or, at least, an advisor – decided that it would be a powerful symbol of continuity and respect for the gods to finish the hall's decoration. As the years passed, Luxor Temple's priests watched craftsmen carve and paint scenes of the Opet Festival, eternalising Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun's presence at the event.

EMPIRE & WARFARE

Over the centuries before Tutankhamun's reign, Egypt's pharaohs had expanded their territory south along the Nile into Nubia and created a new government position to manage the region - the Viceroy of Kush. One of Tutankhamun's duties was to install an official named Huy into this role. The young king presided over the ceremony, watching from his throne as Huy received the seal of office from an official. The newly appointed viceroy then left the palace audience hall to begin his journey south. Years later, Huy returned to the royal court. He was accompanied by Nubian leaders and prisoners, perhaps caught during a rebellion, and servants carrying tribute, including live animals, gold and shields. The Egyptians also held territory to their north-east, encompassing much of the Levant up to Syria. Under Akhenaten, Egypt had lost control of Qadesh, one of its key cities in this region, to the Hittites, an expanding civilisation from Turkey. This gave the Hittites greater control over lucrative trade networks - a major strategic loss for Egypt. In his later years as king, Tutankhamun decided to rectify this situation. He despatched General Horemheb to lead Egypt's armies to Qadesh, battles were fought and, at some point, Egyptian soldiers marched with severed hands on their spears. One prisoner was held in a cage and brought back to Egypt by boat.

> *"Tutankhamun presented himself as a son of the king of the gods"*

Ultimately though, Qadesh remained in Hittite hands. The campaign must have been a failure. Nonetheless, Horemheb returned to a grand reception at court and paraded his prisoners, each tied to the other, before Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun. The king himself then took some of these prisoners to the Temple of Amun at Karnak, to offer them - and perhaps even execute a few - before the resurgent god.

TUTANKHAMUN'S FINAL DAYS

Over the course of his life, Tutankhamun contracted different strains of malaria, which must have left him intermittently feeling weak and ill, and his club foot made it difficult to walk. On one occasion when visiting a temple, he pulled a reed rush from the ground, perhaps to help steady himself for his religious duties. His servants kept this improvised stick and ensured that it was put in his tomb. None of these problems stopped the young king from living an active life, though. Like other pharaohs, Tutankhamun enjoyed hunting on his chariot - the wheels of two of his chariots became so worn that parts of them had to be replaced.

Tutankhamun was perhaps out hunting when he suffered a severe accident. He broke his leg, leaving an open wound pouring with blood. There was little the palace doctors could do - the severity of the injury made recovery impossible. Within days, Tutankhamun was dead. He was only 19. The king now began his second life, joining the sun god on his eternal journey through the day and night skies, battling against the forces of chaos to protect the cosmos. It was an important duty, the fate of all pharaohs, but the living didn't care. Within a few years, General Horemheb became pharaoh, usurped Tutankhamun's monuments, and took responsibility for his achievements. Later kings omitted Tutankhamun from their lists of royal predecessors. The Amarna era - and anyone associated with it - was to be obliterated from memory.

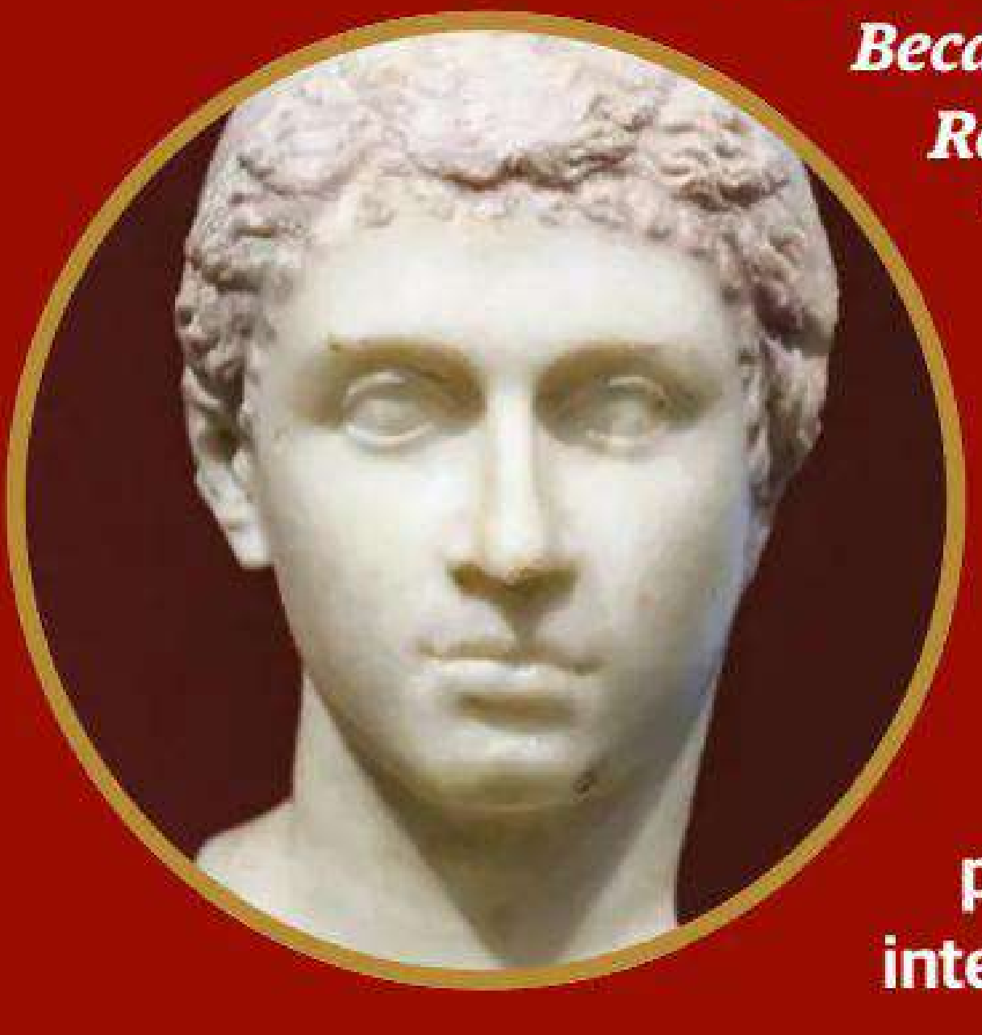
By chance, though, Tutankhamun's tomb remained safe. A year after the royal funeral, a rare storm had sent flash-flood debris hurtling down the Valley of the Kings. When the water subsided, Tutankhamun's tomb lay hidden beneath hard rubble. It remained that way for over 3,000 years, until 4 November 1922, when its first steps were rediscovered. Three weeks later, on 26 November, archaeologist Howard Carter held a candle through a hole forced in the tomb's entranceway and saw "wonderful things". From that moment, Tutankhamun lived again.

EGYPT'S YOUNG PHARAOHS

Tutankhamun was far from the only child to rule Egypt

PEPI II NEFERKARE

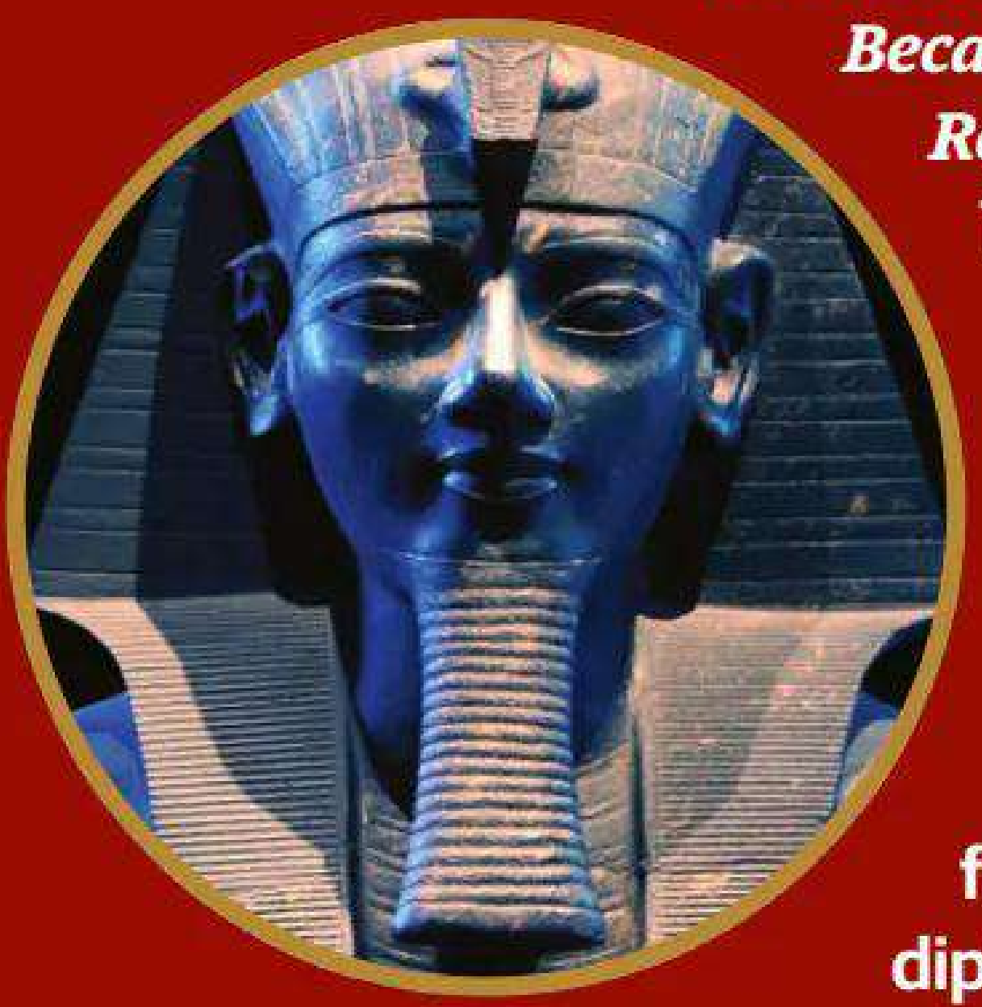
Became pharaoh aged 18
Reign 51 - 30 BCE



The famous queen of Egypt, who would prove to be the last pharaoh of her kingdom, took the throne alongside her brother after the death of their father, Ptolemy XII. She famously hitched her fortunes to Julius Caesar and then Mark Antony, but saw her power fall as each was killed during internal Roman power struggles.

AMENHOTEP III

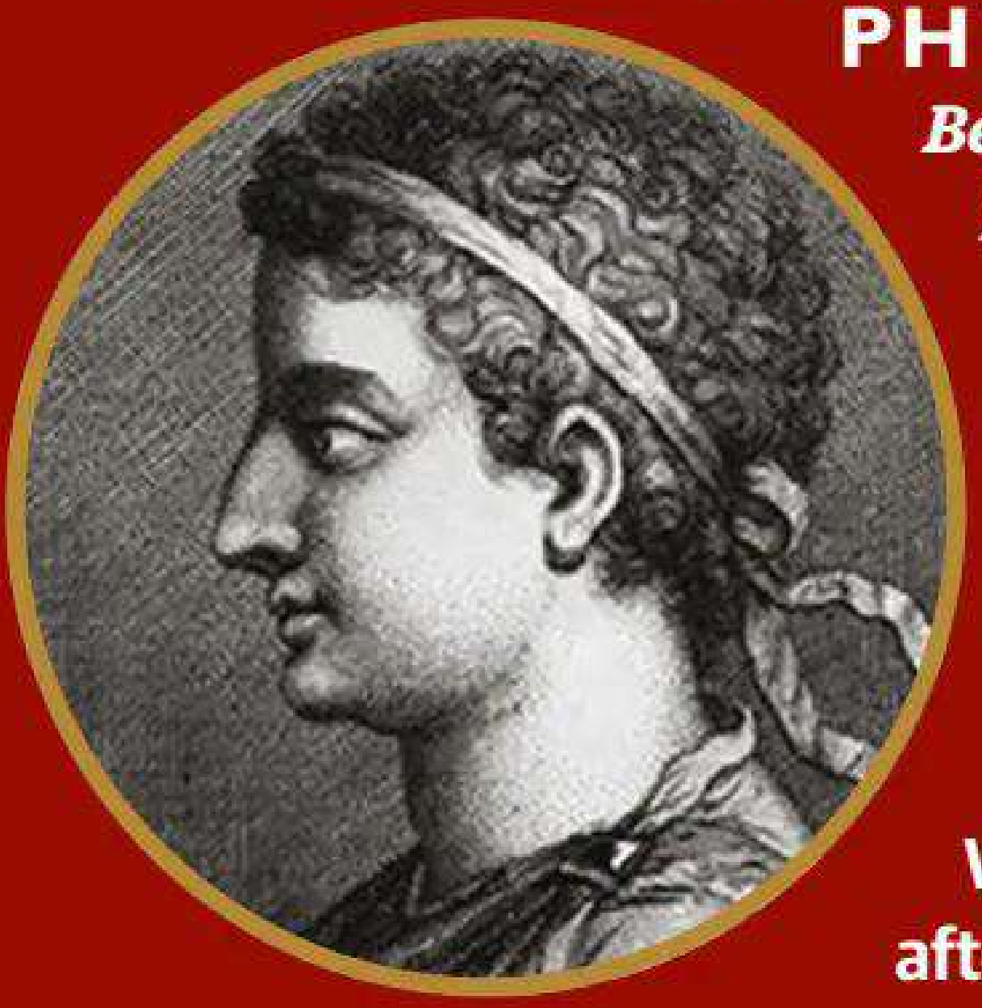
Became pharaoh aged 12
Reign c.1391 - 53 BCE



Tutankhamun's paternal grandfather had also ascended the Egyptian throne at a very young age and shared similar interests with his future heir. We know he enjoyed hunting, for instance, because he issued commemorative scarabs celebrating his feats. Amenhotep III is remembered as a diplomatic and peaceful ruler.

PTOLEMY XIII THEOS PHILOPATOR

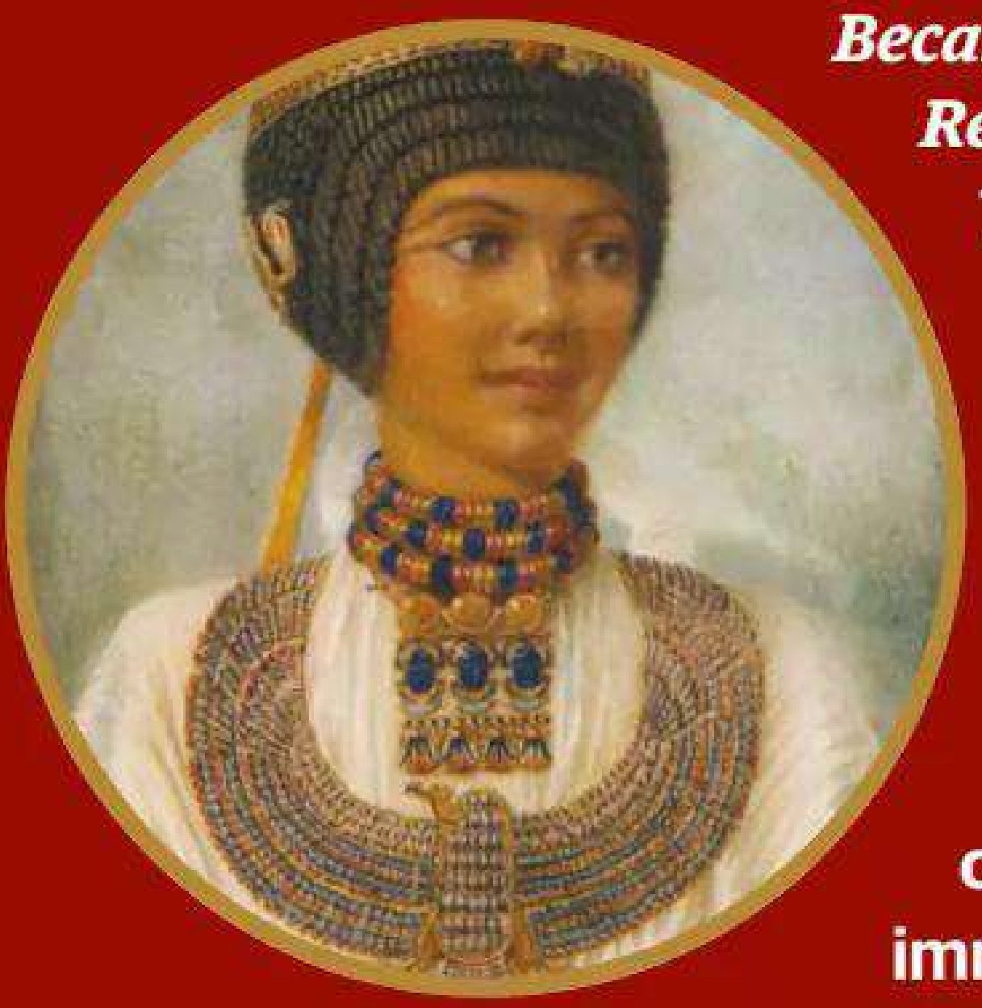
Became pharaoh aged 11
Reign 51 - 47 BCE



One of two brothers of Cleopatra who shared the Egyptian throne, Ptolemy XIII became king alongside his sister after the death of their father. He initially backed Pompey the Great against Caesar during the Alexandrian War and would come to oppose him again after Caesar's victory, only to be killed.

TUTANKHAMUN

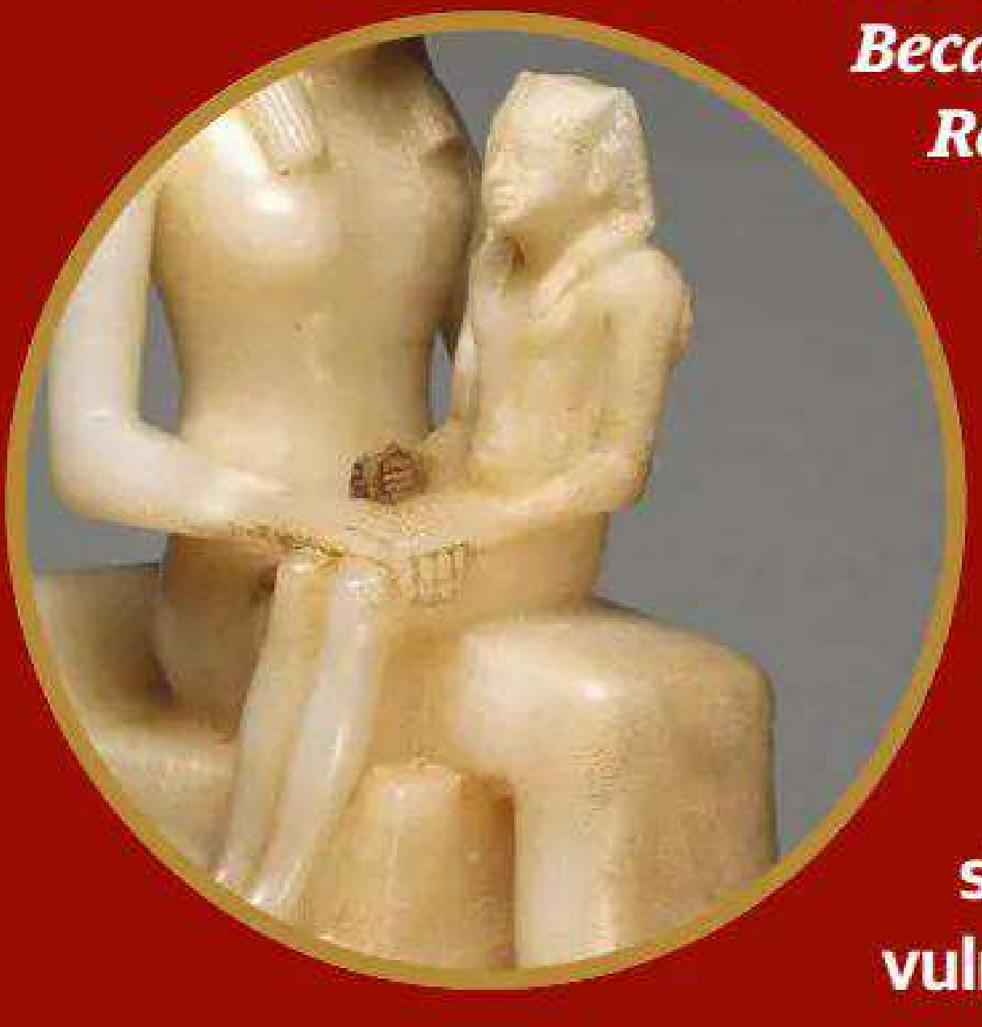
Became pharaoh aged ten
Reign c.1332 - 23 BCE



The young king only served for around nine years on the throne of Egypt and seems to have dealt with a number of health issues during that time. He contracted malaria, suffered from a degenerative bone condition, had a clubfoot necessitating the use of a cane, had a cleft palate and a weakened immune system.

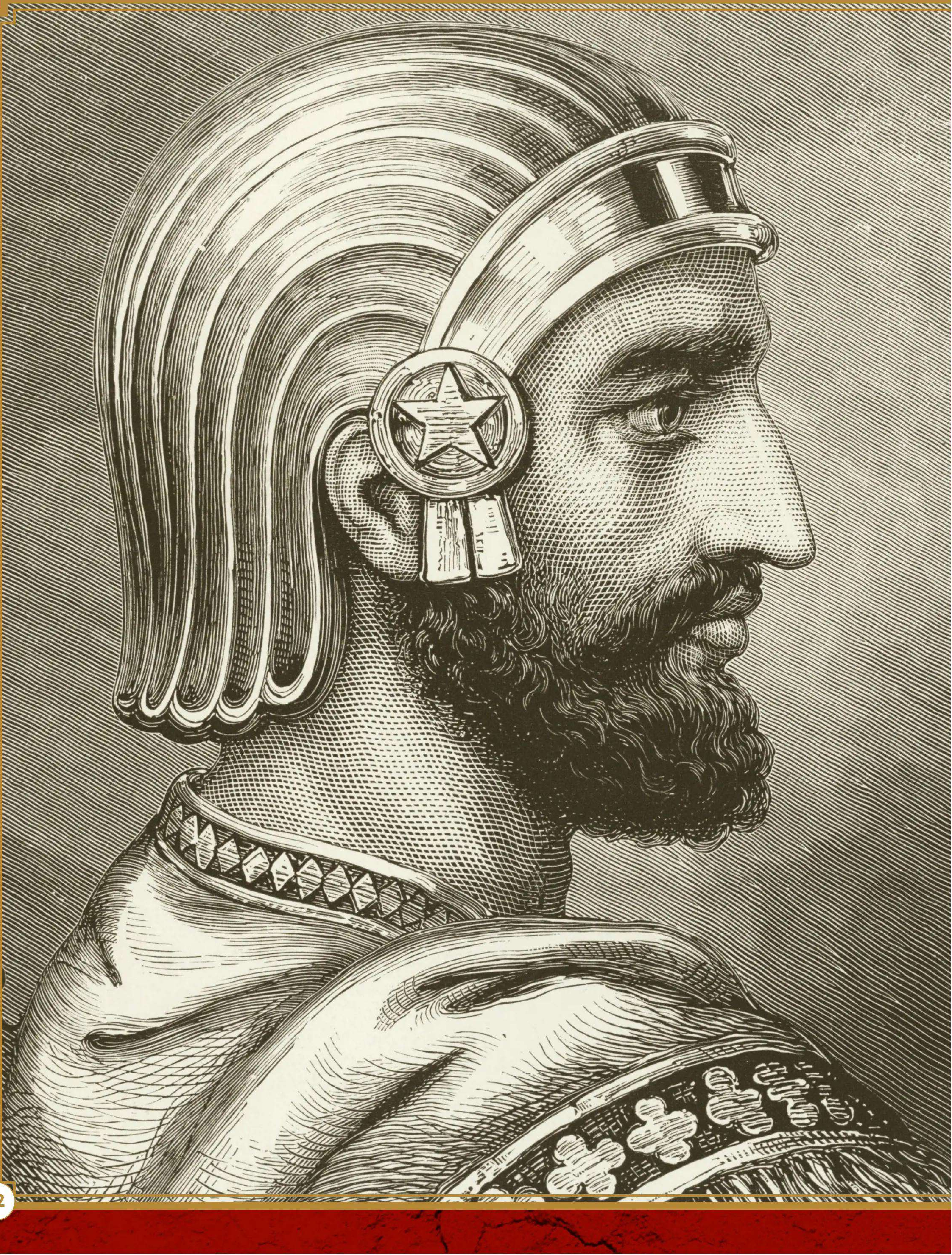
PEPI II NEFERKARE

Became pharaoh aged six
Reign c. 2278 - c. 2184



Nearly 1,000 years before Tutankhamun became pharaoh, Pepi II ascended at an even younger age and may have ruled for as long as 94 years. Possibly as a result of the exceptional length of his reign, his kingdom was weakened by internal strife over the years, leaving Egypt vulnerable in the immediate aftermath.

Images Alamy



Persia, 559-530 BCE

CYRUS THE GREAT

Cyrus was much more than a ruthless conqueror who founded the Persian Empire – he was a brilliant and original administrator whose government actually worked

Words **Wayne Bartlett**

Cyrus the Great was the founder of one of the most impressive regimes of the ancient world, the Persian Empire, which lasted for two centuries (550-330 BCE) until it was destroyed by Alexander the Great. Despite its significance, undisputed facts about Cyrus's conquests are thin on the ground. Scholars tease what they can from legend, from scattered cuneiform tablets, from brief, one-sided accounts in the Biblical Old Testament, and from Cyrus's own statement justifying his conquests.

Before Cyrus's time, Turkey and rest of the Middle East were divided between three empires: Lydia in western Turkey; Media, which spread across to today's Central Asia; and Babylonia, spanning Iraq, Iran and the Mediterranean coast. The ancient Assyrian empire had been divided between the Medes and the Babylonians. To the east and north, in the unknown heart of Asia, were the Scythians, nomadic horsemen who lived in a shadowy world beyond the horizons of civilisation.

Cyrus's homeland, Persia, had been founded by his ancestor Achaemenes when his tribe emerged from inner Asia two centuries earlier. Cyrus, the seventh king of the Achaemenid Dynasty, was born either in about 600 or 575 BCE – a 25-year difference that points to the unreliability of the available sources. When Cyrus was a child, Persia was an unremarkable dependency of the closely related Medes.

Herodotus, Greece's great historian and traveller, writing 100 years later, told of Cyrus's incredible rise. His grandfather, Astyages, king of the Medes, dreamt of a vine growing out of his genitals. Priests told him its meaning – that a descendant would overthrow him. His daughter, Mandane, was pregnant. So the king told a noble to kill the child. The noble delegated the task to a humble shepherd, who disobeyed and raised the child as his own. The truth came out when the boy play-acted being a king so convincingly that he came to Astyages' attention. Astyages recognised his grandson, who was, of course, Cyrus.

> *"Cyrus the Great was the founder of one of the most impressive regimes of the ancient world"*

The boy spent his childhood with Astyages, being trained and educated. According to the Greek historian and diarist Xenophon, he was a boy of rare intelligence and charm: "[He] was something too much of a talker, in part, may be, because of his bringing-up. He had been trained by his master, whenever he sat in judgment, to give a reason for what he did, and to look for the like reason from others. And moreover, his curiosity and thirst for knowledge were such that he must needs inquire from every one he met the explanation of this, that, and the other… talkativeness had become, as it were, his second nature. But… the impression left on the listener was not of arrogance, but of simplicity and warmheartedness… However, as he grew in stature and the years led him to the time when childhood passes into youth he became more chary of his words… but his company was still most fascinating, and little wonder: for whenever it came to a trial of skill between himself and his comrades he would never challenge his mates to those feats in which he himself excelled: he would start precisely one where he felt his own inferiority… and then, when he was worsted, he would be the first to laugh at his own discomfiture."

Eventually, as a young man, Cyrus returned to his father's court in Persia, where he acceded to the throne in about 559 BCE. Herodotus picked up the story. To prevent his dream from coming true, Astyages invaded Persia. But Cyrus defeated him, and in about 550 BCE, took Media. In revenge, Astyages summoned the son of the disobedient noble and had him chopped, roasted and boiled, and then tricked the noble into eating the boy.

Image Look & Learn

Next in line was Lydia, which fell a few years later. No details are recorded, though Herodotus has a story to fill the gap. The Lydian king was Croesus, of legendary wealth. Croesus consulted the great oracle at Delphi and was told that if he attacked the Persians he would destroy "a great empire." He attacked, and Cyrus, strengthened by Median troops, drove Croesus back inside his capital, Sardis. Persian troops then scaled a supposedly unscaleable wall, and the city fell. The great empire that Croesus destroyed was his own.

In 540 BCE, Cyrus turned on his next target, Babylon. Famous as the capital of a great empire for more than 1,000 years, Babylon had fallen on hard times until its fortunes revived under Nebuchadnezzar in the early 500s BCE, during which he sacked Jerusalem (587-586 BCE) and captured numerous Jews, an event vividly recorded in the Bible. By Cyrus's time, though, Babylon had become a soft target because its king, Nabonidus, had been absent for ten years (553 BCE–543 BCE), leaving the city in the hands of his son, Belshazzar. His unexplained absence - perhaps trying to extend trade routes in Arabia - seems to have made him unpopular. Or perhaps he was unpopular because, on his return, he had all the images of Babylonian gods brought from their sanctuaries into the capital for safekeeping. Whatever the reason, it gave Cyrus an unexpected chance to present himself as the protector of Babylonian religion.

In autumn 539 BCE - one of the few firm dates in the history of the time - Cyrus invaded Babylonia, won a battle at Opis, to the north of the capital, and then entered Babylon, seemingly without further resistance. According to Herodotus, the Persians did this by diverting the Euphrates, lowering the water level until they could march across the riverbed. Nabonidus was captured and he vanished from history, his fate unknown.

Cyrus recorded his conquest in the clay document known as the Cyrus Cylinder, a blatant piece of PR designed to justify his conquests. It claims that Nabonidus had been unstable and impious, and that the great god Enlil had chosen Cyrus as his instrument to bring peace by restoring the shrines, allowing refugees to return and rebuilding the capital. The cylinder declares: "I returned the images of the gods, who had resided there, to their places and I let them dwell in eternal abodes. I gathered all their inhabitants and returned to them their dwellings." As a result, "all nobles and governors bowed down before him (Cyrus) and kissed his feet, and their faces shone."

His generosity did not apply only to the local religions. The Jews were allowed to return from their captivity to Israel. Possibly (as the Bible says), Cyrus actually funded the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, the rebuilding occurred under Cyrus's grandson, Darius, but Cyrus's role became accepted as a fact. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus claimed to quote a letter from Cyrus: "I have given leave to as many of the Jews that dwell in my country

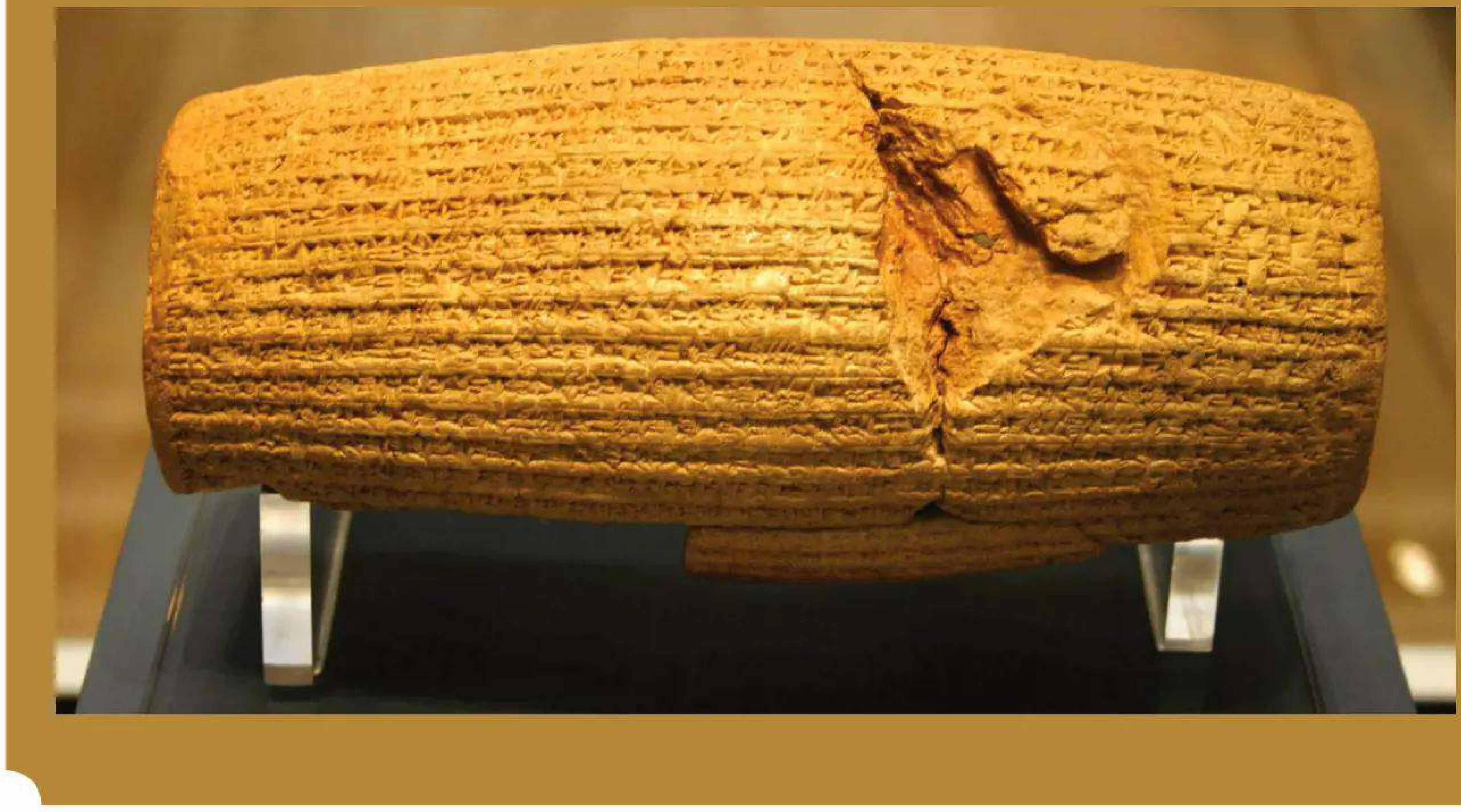
A statue of Cyrus the Great in Germany

THE CYRUS CYLINDER

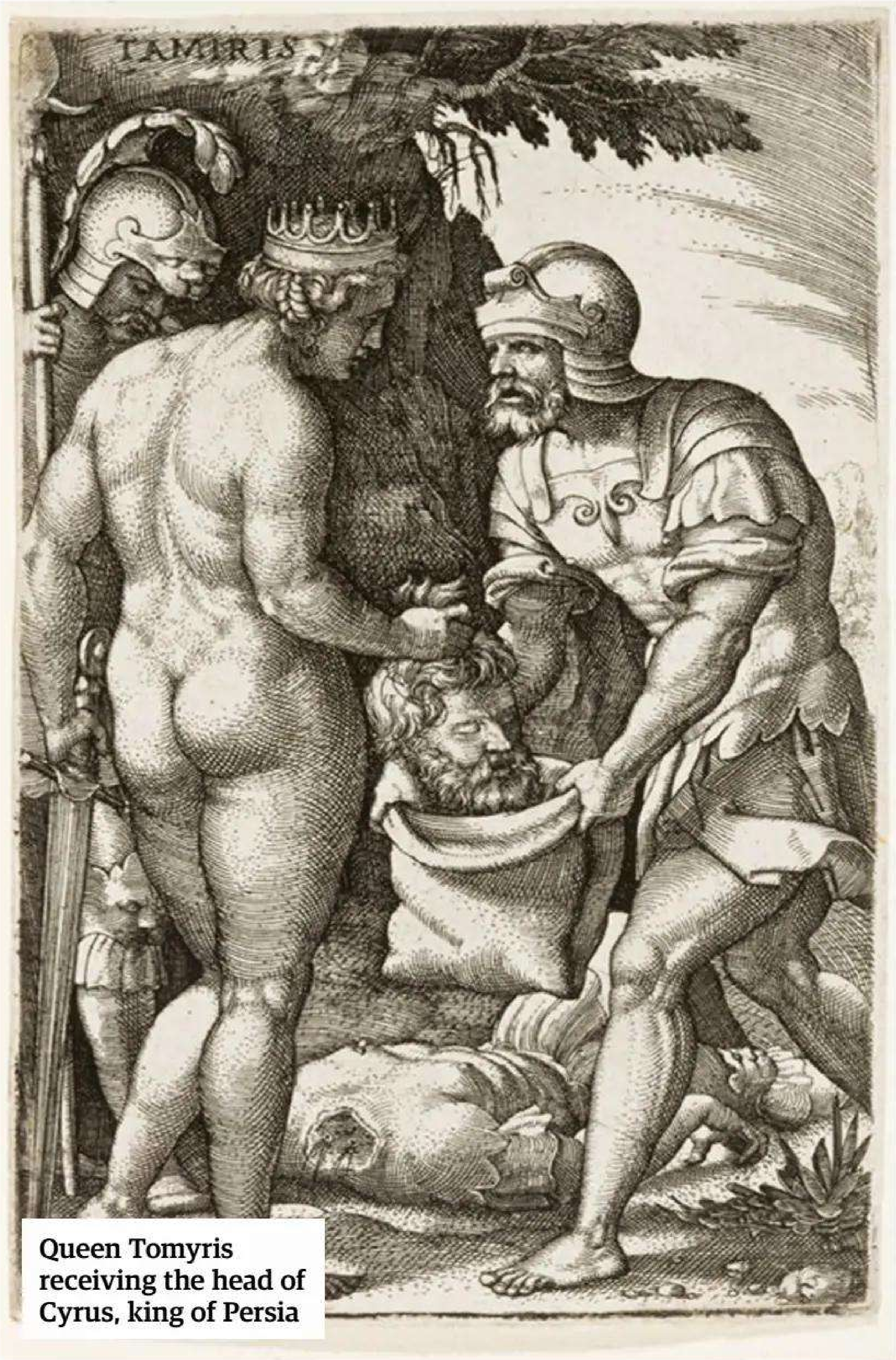
It's been called the first ever human rights charter, but what did it promise?

The Cyrus Cylinder, only ten inches long, is a major source for the king's achievements, though an unreliable one. For one thing, it is damaged, and the text is incomplete. For another, it is in effect propaganda justifying Cyrus's conquests and rule. The Babylonian king, Nabonidus, is denigrated and Cyrus is praised as the protector of Babylonian interests. The cuneiform text, here selected from the British Museum translation, reads in part:

"Rites inappropriate to [the cult-cities] were daily gabbled, and as an insult, he (Nabonidus) brought the daily offerings to a halt. In his mind, reverential fear of Marduk, king of the gods, came to an end. He did more evil to his city every day, and to his people. Enlil-of-the-gods became extremely angry at their complaints. The gods left their shrines, angry that he had made them enter into Babylon. Enlil-of-the-gods inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took the hand of Cyrus, and called him by name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything. Marduk, the great lord, who nurtures his people, saw with pleasure his fine deeds and true heart, and ordered that he should go to Babylon. He had him enter without fighting or battle. He handed over to him Nabonidus, the king who did not fear him. All the people, nobles and governors bowed down before him and kissed his feet, rejoicing over his kingship, and their faces shone. I am Cyrus, king of the universe, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world."



The tomb of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae in modern-day Iran



Queen Tomyris receiving the head of Cyrus, king of Persia

> *"Cyrus had ruled for some 30 years, and created an empire more than 2,500 kilometres across, the largest in the world to date"*

as please to return to their own country, and to rebuild their city, and to build the temple of God at Jerusalem on the same place where it was before," (though Josephus was writing 500 years later, and presents no evidence for this).

In any event, the Jews developed a huge admiration for Cyrus. The prophet Isaiah called Cyrus God's 'anointed' – in effect the Messiah – and prophesied God-given victories over all nations. Another prophet, Ezra, has Cyrus saying that God "hath given me all the kingdoms of the Earth."

After Babylon, where now? To the north and east lay another world to conquer, the land of the nomadic horsemen, the Scythians. Having appointed governors and officials to rule the different provinces and peoples of his empire, Cyrus probably died fighting the Scythians in 530 BCE. Again, we have no firm records, just stories, the best of which is told by Herodotus.

One of the Scythian tribes was called Massagetae, known for drinking fermented mares' milk and for the outlandish equality of the sexes. Armoured in helmets and war belts, they fought on horseback with battle axes and bows, men and women alike. At the time, they were ruled by a queen named Tomyris.

Nomadic horse-archers were almost impossible to defeat because they vanished like mist across the steppe. So (in Herodotus's tale) Cyrus resorted to trickery. He set out a banquet with much wine, which was unfamiliar to the milk-drinking nomads. The Persians withdrew, the nomads advanced, found the banquet, ate, drank and fell into a stupor. The Persians returned, killed most of them and took Tomyris's son prisoner. When he awoke, he committed suicide. Tomyris swore to get her revenge: "Leave my land now... or I will give you more blood than you can drink." In the next battle, the nomads destroyed the Persians and killed Cyrus. Tomyris found the king's corpse, filled a skin container with blood, cut off his head and thrust it into the blood with these words: "Although I am alive and gained victory over you in battle, you have destroyed me because you took my son by trickery. Now I shall do just as I threatened, and give you your fill of blood."

It is a vivid tale, but its truth for Herodotus was probably less in the details than the moral: great leaders should not resort to trickery.

Cyrus had ruled for some 30 years, and created an empire more than 2,500 kilometres across, the largest in the world to date, reaching from the Black Sea to present-day Afghanistan. His son, Cambyses and another descendant, Darius, extended the empire into Egypt, the Libyan and India. It was not to last. In the 330s BCE, Alexander the Great defeated the Persians, and the Achaemenids came to an ignominious end.

However, Cyrus's creation sent echoes down the corridors of time. Scholars agree that his success as an imperial ruler owed much to his form of government, balancing central administration with local freedom. His system was retained by subsequent dynasties and served for more than 1,000 years until the Arab conquest of Persia in the seventh century.

The Cyrus Cylinder even proclaims such a modern-sounding commitment to religious freedom and justice that, in the 1970s, the Shah of Iran called it "the first human rights charter in history." More likely, according to others, it resembles modernity in a different form, as a puffed-up piece of propaganda. But Iran still sees it as a foundation stone of national identity.

The memory of Cyrus lives on at his supposed burial site near Shiraz, in southern Iran. The tomb, standing on a rock plinth, is close to the ruins of Pasargadae, Cyrus's capital until his son Cambyses changed it to Susa. There is no hard evidence that it is his tomb, but if it is – and the same as the one honoured two centuries after his burial by Alexander – it bore a long-gone inscription, which ran in one version: "Passer-by, I am Cyrus, who gave the Persians an empire, and was king of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this monument."

Images Mohammad Reza Domiri Ganji/CC BY-SA 4.0 (tomb), Mike Peel/CC BY-SA 4.0 (cylinder), Gras-Ober/CC BY-SA 3.0 (statue)

XERXES I

PERSIA'S GOD-KING

How the ancient Iranian emperor overcame revolt and intrigue to dominate West Asia

Words **Murray Dahm**

Xerxes (the Greek spelling of his name), was the king of the Persian Empire from 486 to 465 BCE. He is remembered in Western scholarship for his defeat by combined Greek forces during his invasion of Greece in 480 and 479 BCE. A quick look at his 20-year reign, however, tells us that his rule must have amounted to more than that. Unfortunately, the best surviving source for him remains Herodotus, the Greek historian from Halicarnassus, who wrote the history of the Persian Wars (from the Greek perspective). Xerxes is, therefore, the villain of the story, and reduced almost to a caricature of a bad ruler. Other contemporary, near-contemporary and later Greek writers (such as the dramatist Aeschylus in his play *The Persians*, and the philosopher Plato) add to this picture.

Yet Xerxes reigned for 15 years after his defeat in Greece and his rule was uninterrupted, so his loss, while momentous for the Greeks, was relatively unimportant in the context of the enormous Persian Empire. Xerxes still ruled over a vast region that stretched from India in the east to Europe in the west, from Egypt in the south to Azerbaijan in the north. Despite his defeat in Greece, he was a strong ruler who quashed revolts in Egypt and Babylon that had already started when he took the throne in 486 BCE. These had begun in the last years of Darius I and Xerxes put down both efficiently. The empire was, nonetheless, relatively stable under his tenure. He was also responsible for the construction (or at least the completion) of immense building complexes in both Susa and Persepolis.

> *"Xerxes is the villain of Herodotus's story and reduced to a caricature of a bad ruler"*

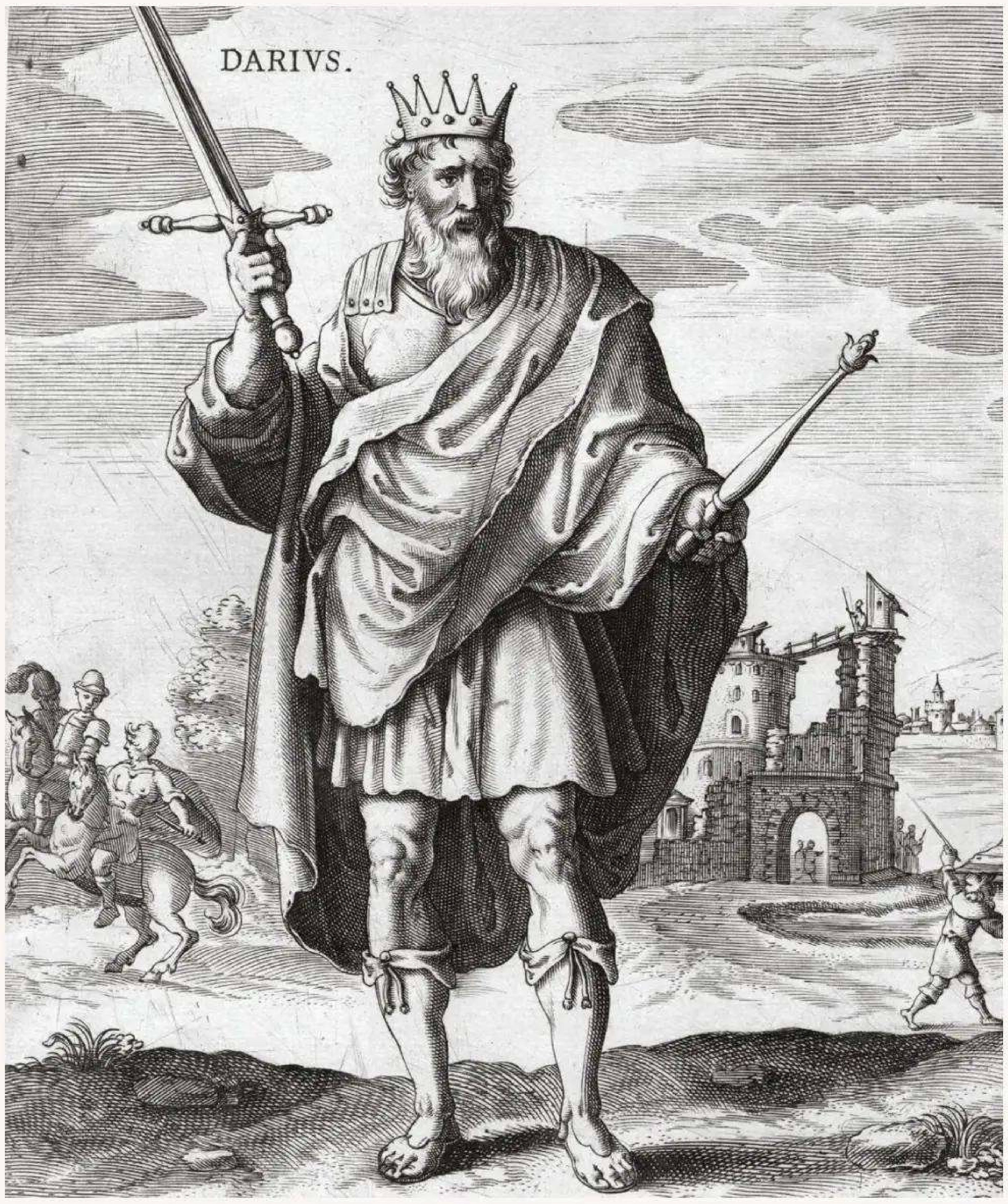
BORN TO RULE

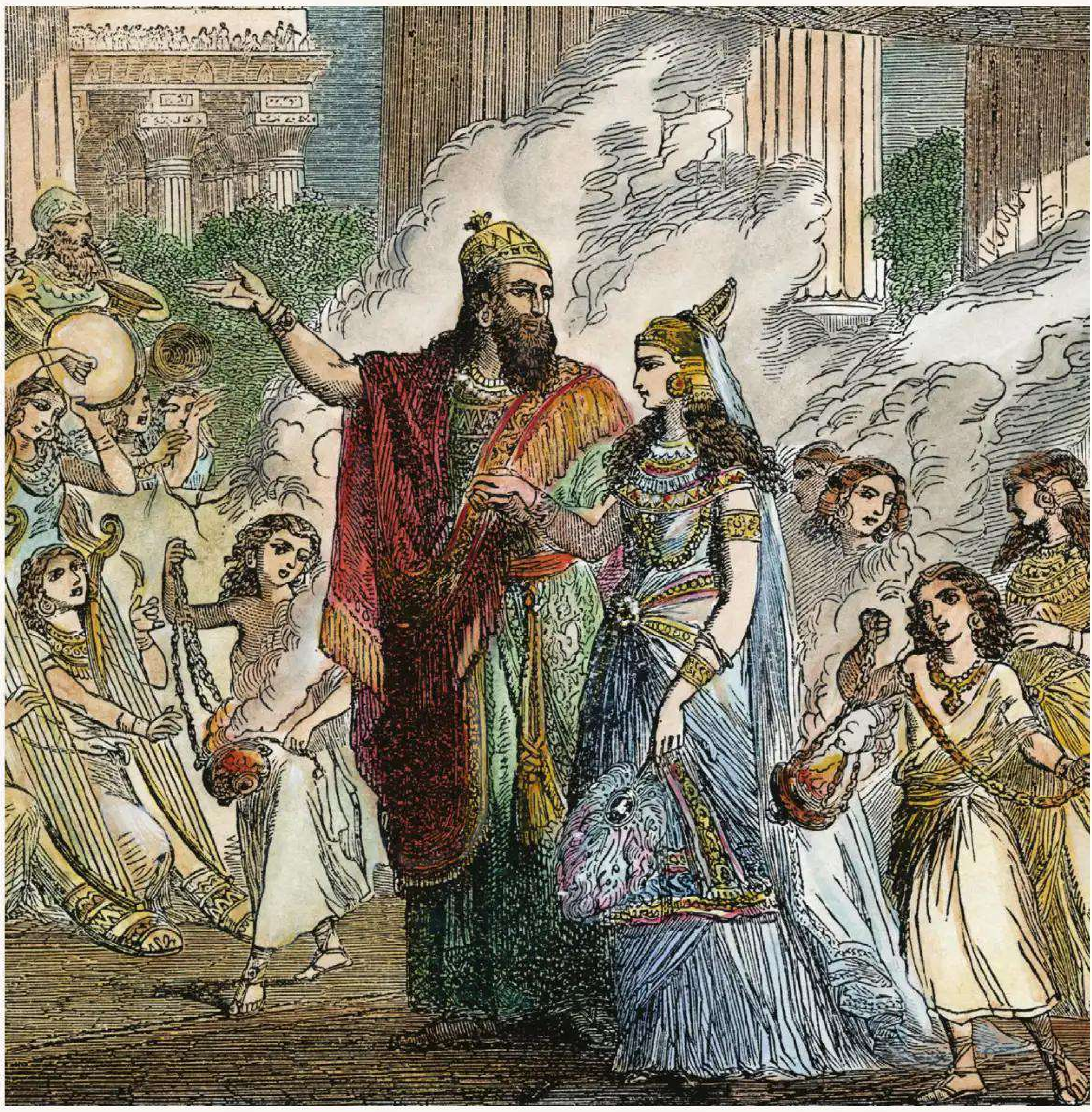
Xerxes was the fourth (or fifth) king of the Achaemenid dynasty, the son of Darius I, the Great, and Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus the Great. Born around 518 BCE, Xerxes was destined to rule. His father Darius had overthrown Bardiya, the second son of Cyrus, in 522 BCE (in his inscriptions Darius called Bardiya a usurper and so not a legitimate successor). Although Xerxes became king at the age of 32 after his father died in 486 BCE, he had been serving as a crown prince for 13 years already, since he was about 18. Prior to that (and again according to mainly Greek sources) he would have been taught to ride and hunt. These were not only aristocratic skills but also directly transferable to warfare, involving both archery and the use of the spear. Persian boys, and there is no reason to assume Xerxes was any different, were raised in the Zoroastrian religion and taught wisdom, justice, prudence, bravery and truthfulness.

PUTTING DOWN REBELLION

Xerxes' first task was suppressing the revolt in Egypt. In all probability, preparation for the

Illustration Kevin McGivern Image Alamy





ABOVE-LEFT Darius I died in 486 BCE and was succeeded by his son Xerxes

ABOVE A 19th century wood engraving of Xerxes marrying Esther

ABOVE-RIGHT The Greek defeat at Thermopylae attained a near-mythical status

expedition was almost completed when Darius died, and Xerxes would lead the expedition in person. This was probably to assert his authority over the empire and the army, but was also tied in with finishing his father's projects, a key theme of his reign. He marched to Egypt and defeated the revolt by early 484 BCE. He appointed his brother, Achaemenes (also a son of Atossa) as satrap of Egypt and the province (satrapy) gave him no further problems during his reign.

Babylon also revolted against Xerxes' rule in the summer of 484 BCE. It is possible the conditions that led to it (which may have been religious or tax-based) were already at boiling point at the end of Darius's reign, but the new king might have been expected to fix things. Yet he did not (he was distracted by suppressing the revolt in Egypt), and because conditions probably stayed the same, Babylonians chose to revolt, killing their governor and proclaiming a new king. The revolt lasted from 484-482 BCE, although it is possible that there were two revolts - one that lasted briefly in 484 BCE and a second in 482 BCE. The revolt spread to other cities (Sippar, Borsippa, Dilbat and Kish) and was suppressed following a siege of Babylon. It is unclear what retributions the Babylonians faced for their rebellion. It was once claimed Xerxes dealt harshly with the city, but there does not seem to have been any destruction of it. It is possible that its previously tolerated religious autonomy, especially in regard to Marduk, the patron god of the city, was dismantled or somehow undermined. Xerxes appears to have stopped using the title 'King of Babylon' in 482 BCE, perhaps as further punishment to the rebellious city. Other local rival cities such as Uruk were now given preferential treatment that may have further punished Babylon. These were nuanced and subtle punishments and not the kind of behaviour we might expect of Herodotus's villain who, when Pythius, a former Lydian king, requested his eldest son be excused military duty (four other sons also served), cut the man's son in half so that his army could march between it.

THE INVASION OF GREECE

After the defeat of Darius I's generals at Marathon (Datis and Artaphernes), the king planned a new expedition to lead himself. Yet, his failing health meant he did not see this expedition to fruition, despite three years of planning. Xerxes inherited the idea, plans and motivation for this invasion and, once his throne was secure and the revolts in Egypt and Babylon suppressed, he began putting his father's plans into effect. This was in keeping with Xerxes' policy of completing his father's work - perhaps surpassing it. However, whatever army Darius had raised for his invasion of Greece was used for the suppression of the revolt in Egypt; any remnant of that in besieging Babylon. This meant Xerxes had to prepare for an invasion of Greece anew, which took four years. These preparations, as detailed by Herodotus, suggest that Xerxes intended to surpass any plans Darius may have had. However, Herodotus's meticulous details of those plans are surely fabricated - or at the very least massively exaggerated. According to Herodotus, Xerxes marched more than five million men into Greece in spring 480 BCE. This was in addition to a fleet of 1,207 triremes (with 3,000 50-oared ships, light galleys, and horse transports). The logistics of the day could not have supported anywhere near that amount of men or such

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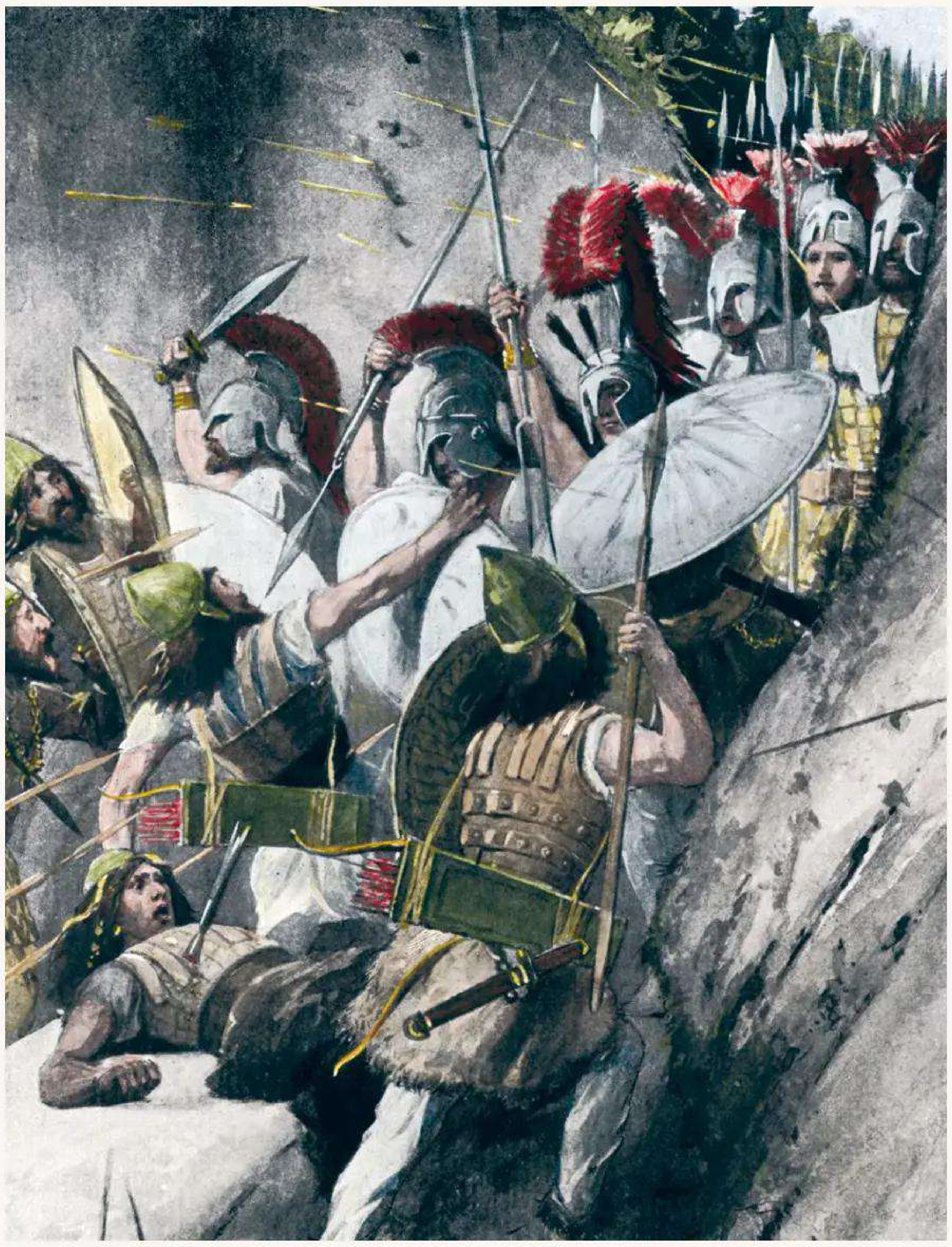


a fleet (there was nowhere for such a vast armada to beach each night). And archaeologically there is evidence that the preparations did not take so long.

Nonetheless, Xerxes invaded Greece with an army and fleet that outnumbered his opponents. As he advanced, he demanded supplies and water from the cities, tribes, kingdoms and communities he encountered. The vast majority acquiesced and, later, when Greece emerged unexpectedly victorious, they forgot they had gone over to the Persian side, or claimed that they'd only pretended to. Only the Greek city of Thebes was not forgiven for 'medizing'; many other communities hid in Thebes' shadow and allowed her to continue to take the blame well into the next century.

The Greeks mounted a defence at the pass of Thermopylae and, at the same time, a naval delaying action at Artemisium. Despite the account of Herodotus and popular culture, Thermopylae was a defeat for the Greeks and an unnecessary one - there was no need for the Spartan king Leonidas and his inadequately small force to remain at Thermopylae once he knew his position was compromised. Likewise, it is highly unlikely the Greeks inflicted 6,400 casualties on the Persians at the expense of a few hundred of their own. But that is the story our sources tell us and, as so often, any Persian version of events has not survived.

SALAMIS

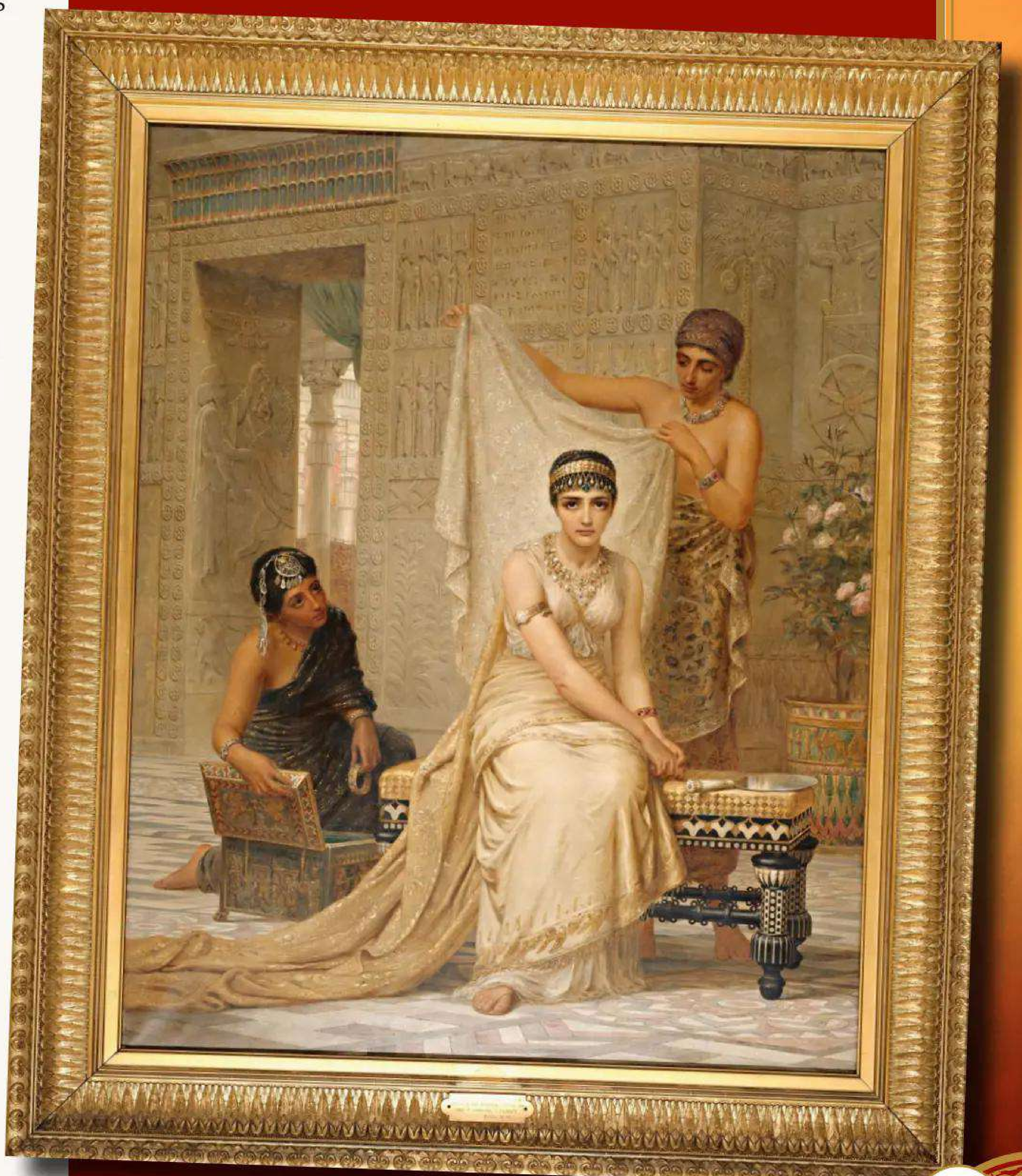
Once he had taken the pass at Thermopylae, Xerxes advanced on the city of Athens and put it to the torch. This was the entire point of the invasion - to punish Athens. The other perpetrator of the burning of the temples in Sardis, Eretria (a city on the island of Euboea) had been punished in a similar fashion in 490 BCE. The vast majority of the population of Athens had been evacuated to the island of Salamis, just off the coast of Attica. In the waters off the island, the Greek fleet had gathered to resist. Understandably, Xerxes chose to fight with his fleet against the Greeks. He outnumbered its vessels by at least two-to-one (400 of his ships had been lost in a storm) and victory would end Greek resistance. If conquest was his plan, this would make Greece his.

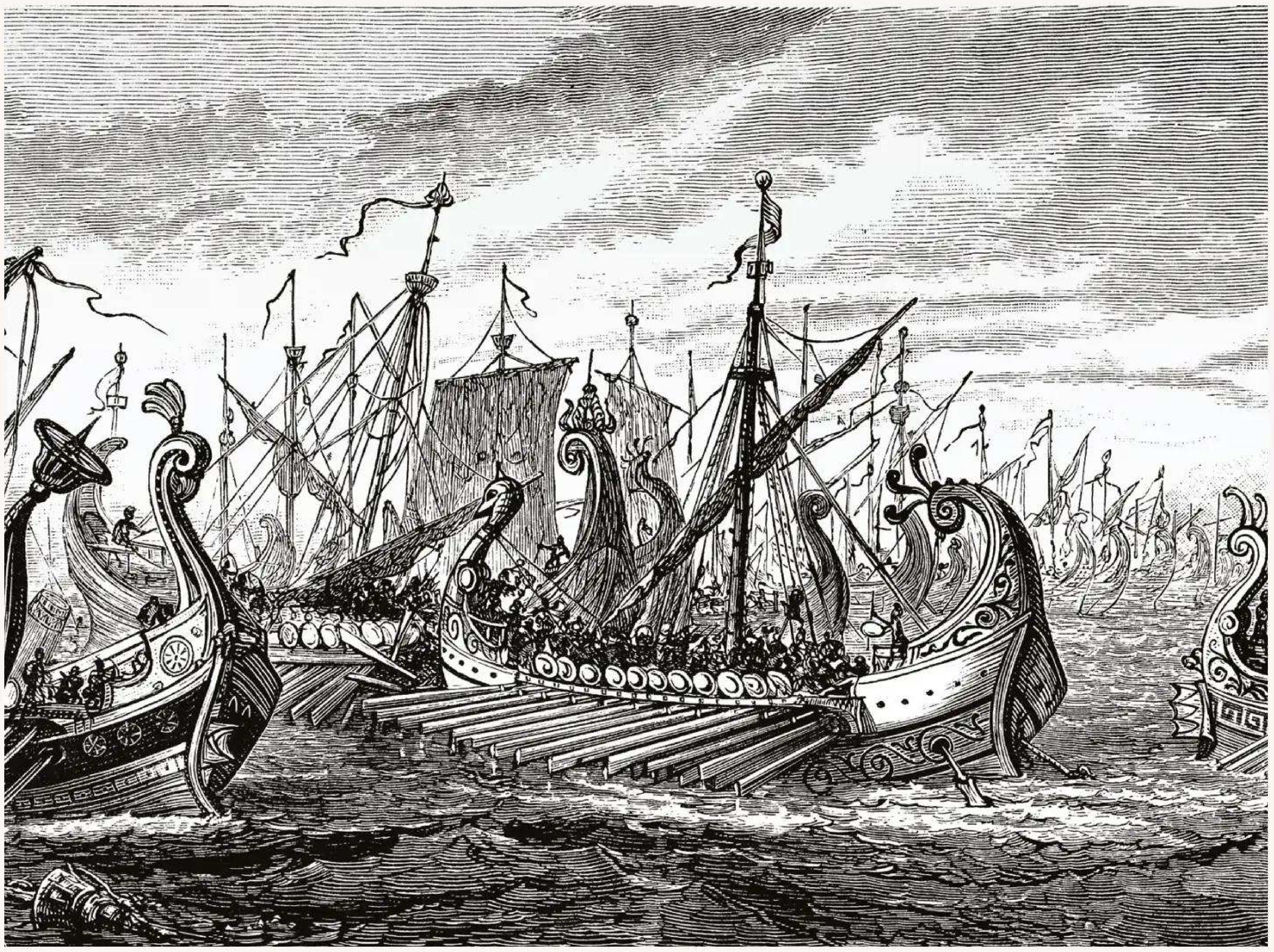
The account of the battle is given to us from the Greek perspective

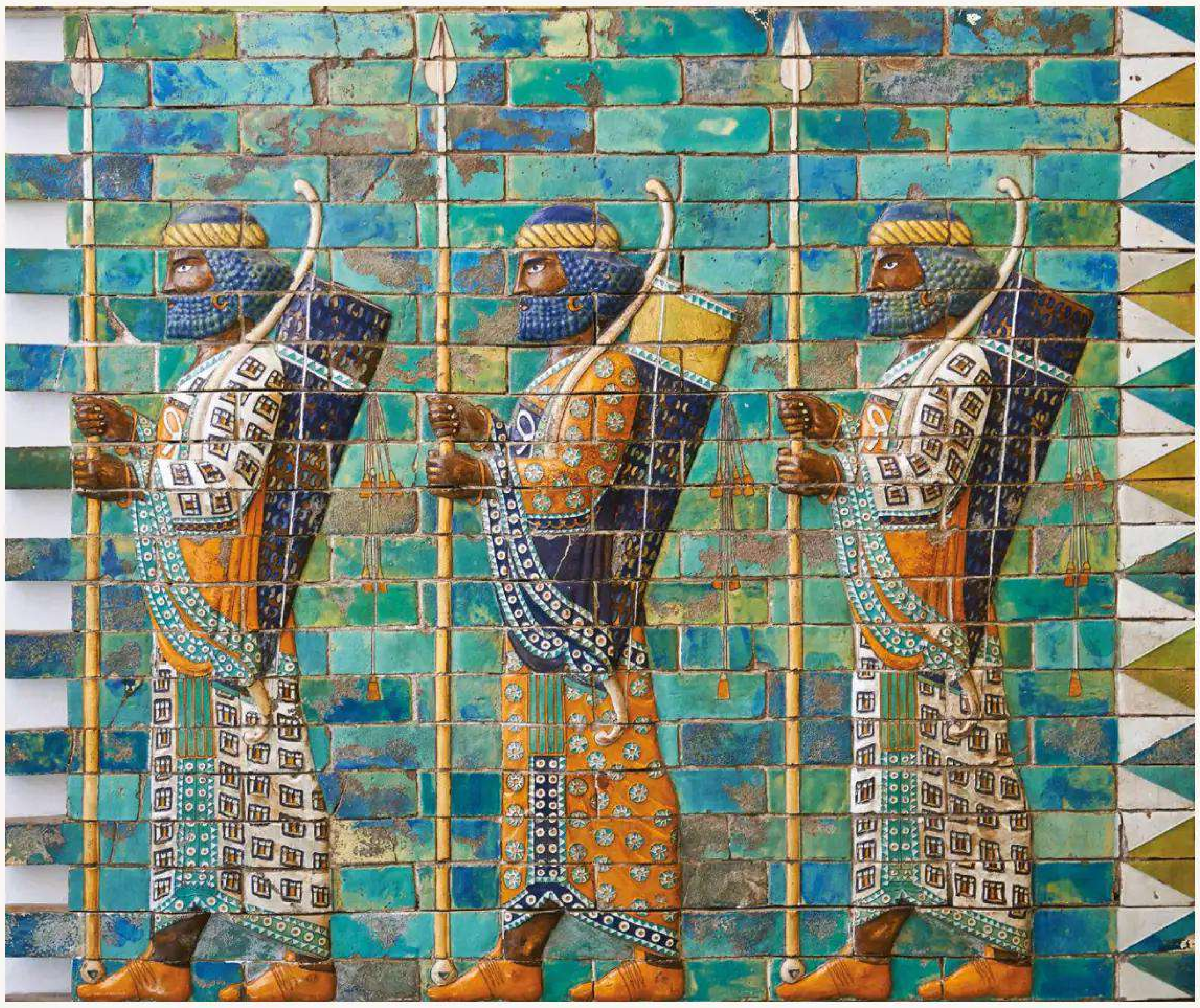
XERXES AND THE BIBLE

In several books of the Hebrew Bible we find a Persian king named Ahasuerus - he may be the same man as Xerxes

In the *Books of Esther*, *Ezra*, *Daniel* and *Tobit* we find an Ahasuerus mentioned. This may have been the Hebrew version of Xerxes' name, Xšaya-ršā. In the *Book of Esther*, she is the Jewish queen of a king, Ahasuerus, who, at Susa "ruled over a 127 provinces from India to Nubia" (*Esther 1:1*). This domain is the same as that of the Achaemenid Empire, as is the capital (although, historically, there were only 26 satrapies). In the text, the king's wife Vashti is deposed and Esther takes her place. There is no record of any Jewish queen for a Persian king, but the story may have had its roots in a scandal regarding Xerxes lusting after his brother Masistes' wife and then her daughter, his niece Artayante, whom he'd had married to his son, Darius, and with whom he had an affair (a sign of his and Persian degradation and decadence to Herodotus). Xerxes' queen, Amestris, took vengeance, not on the daughter but on the mother, mutilating her. Masistes fled towards his satrapy of Bactria intending to start a revolt. In *Ezra 4:6* we find an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem made to Ahasuerus in his accession year (tying in with the revolt in Egypt and, perhaps, other uncertainty with the change of king). In the *Book of Daniel* (*9:1*) we find Ahasuerus seemingly as a different man, Astyages, a king of the Median empire, the father of Darius the Mede. This Darius was the king in Babylon (not mentioned in history) but this may relate to the revolt in Babylon under Xerxes. In the *Book of Tobit* (*14:15*), Ahasuerus is an ally of Nebuchadnezzar who helped him destroy Nineveh - so may be Cyaxares I, who destroyed Nineveh in 612 BCE.







ABOVE Cleverly lured into the narrow waters off Salamis, the vast Persian fleet was defeated

LEFT Glazed-brick images of Persian soldiers from the palace of Darius I. The appearance of Persian soldiers would remain largely unaltered for the next 150 years

and is confused, but the Greeks emerged victorious, luring the Persian fleet into narrower waters where their superior numbers counted against them. According to Herodotus, Xerxes had erected a platform the better to see his fleet perform. We are not told of the losses to the Persian fleet but the following year we are told the Persians only had 300 triremes – the loss of 500 ships (not to mention the 400 in a storm) makes Herodotus's exaggerations clear – there were never so many ships to be lost in the first place. Herodotus paints Xerxes as afraid that he would be cut off in Greece after Salamis and keen to retreat back to Persia as soon as possible. This is not a credible picture, but it is the one that has come to dominate ideas about Xerxes – he was as afraid in defeat as he had been overconfident and cruel in anticipation of (an easy) victory.

Although associated with the defeat at Plataea in 479 BCE, Xerxes had already departed from Greece the previous year (and so had spent less than a year on the campaign). He left the fighting of that battle to his subordinates, especially Mardonius, his cousin. Although the invasion was a failure, Xerxes had been victorious in his advance into Greece, at Thermopylae and Artemisium, and in the burning of Athens to punish them for burning the temples at Sardis. We are told by Greek historians that Xerxes actually intended to annex Greece as part of the Persian Empire but, because he lost the naval battle of Salamis in September 480 BCE and departed from Greece soon after, we cannot know if that was his true purpose. It probably was but, from a propaganda perspective, he had achieved what he'd set out to do. One thing his inscriptions at Persepolis and Susa reveal is that he portrayed himself as completing his father's work. In this, his punishment of Athens (and not the annexation of Greece) may have been paramount. Darius had attempted to punish Athens in 490 BCE with a smaller invasion that resulted in a famous and unexpected Athenian victory at the Battle of Marathon. By punishing Athens as his father had intended, Xerxes may well have seen the task completed. His inscriptions also stress piety, and he would've seen punishing Athens for burning the temples at Sardis as a pious act. That said, he may also have wanted to continue adding territory to the Persian Empire.

Still, Persia would continue to be a major player in Greek politics until the end of the following century – something Greek historians do not like to emphasise. Persia was a major force in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE) and thereafter the King's Peace arrangement of 386 BCE dictated Greek politics for some years. As such, Xerxes' long arm may have influenced Greece far more than Greek historians were willing to admit. At the same time, the victories at Salamis and Plataea gave the Greeks a huge boost in confidence and saw them assert themselves in the Aegean and Black Seas and on the coast of Anatolia – over time this would erode Xerxes' authority. The aftermath of

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Salamis and Plataea, however, saw Xerxes still wield great authority in western Anatolia; cities like Halicarnassus were still fiercely loyal, as were other states. Xerxes' appointments of new satraps and other reforms to the administration of the region ensured continuing Persian rule rather than widespread rebellion. The picture of Greek resistance to Persian conquest would, we might expect, have led to the latter but it simply did not happen. In the immediate aftermath of defeat, there may have been an attempted coup by Xerxes' brother Masistes in 478 BCE, but he was caught and executed before it could be launched.

BUILDING PROJECTS

While 480 BCE was a short period in Xerxes' reign, he also undertook long-lasting projects. Persepolis was built as the ceremonial capital of the Persians; its name means 'City of the Persians' - this too is a Greek word - while the Persian was Pārsa-karta, which simply meant 'Persia'. Building was begun in 515 BCE under Darius and then completed by Xerxes. The whole city was built on an artificially raised platform of 125,000-metres-square, cut into a mountain on one side and using retaining walls on the other three. The structure has five halls (usually described as 'palaces') of varying sizes with grand entrances and stairways. It may have been built as a purely ceremonial centre; identifying domestic buildings and structures has proven immensely difficult. The reliefs that adorn the complex all depict ceremonies involving the presentation of gifts to the king and parades of soldiers, and these may represent a new year celebration. Persepolis is also in a relatively remote location so it's unlikely to have been a real or administrative capital - that was located at Susa, one of the oldest cities of the empire, where new building was begun by Darius at the same time as at Persepolis (and also completed by Xerxes). Other important cities were Babylon and Ecbatana, although Babylon retained a fierce sense of independence (as seen in its rebellions - it had been conquered by the Persians in 539 BCE, only 50-odd years earlier when it rebelled). Ecbatana had been the Medes' capital since the eighth century and was conveniently located at a crossroads of several important routes across the empire. In the use of these cities (and in Xerxes' reign more generally) there is as much a sense of continuity with the past as there is with new building work.

> *"Xerxes marched more than five million men into Greece in spring 480 BCE"*

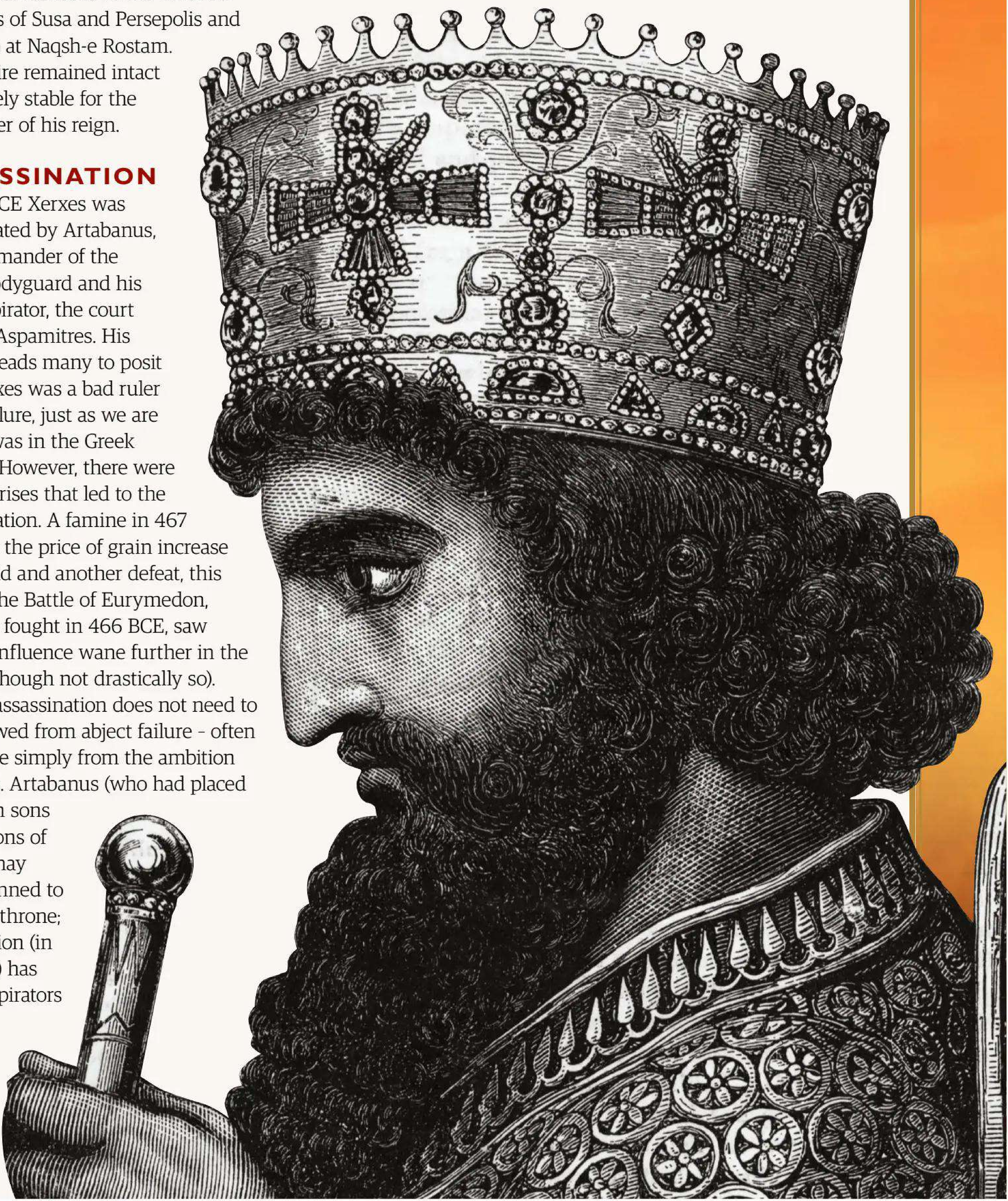
Like his father, Xerxes constructed his tomb at Naqsh-e Rostam, a rock cliff 12 kilometres (7.4 miles) north-west of Persepolis that had been used since 1000 BCE and houses four Achaemenid kings. The façade of his tomb, which is a close copy of that of his father, shows Xerxes supported by the soldiers from all over his empire - including Macedonians and/or Ionian Greeks.

Much of the remainder of Xerxes' reign is met with silence in our Greek sources, the only evidence is in the finished buildings of Susa and Persepolis and his tomb at Naqsh-e Rostam. His empire remained intact and largely stable for the remainder of his reign.

ASSASSINATION

In 465 BCE Xerxes was assassinated by Artabanus, the commander of the Royal Bodyguard and his co-conspirator, the court eunuch Aspamitres. His murder leads many to posit that Xerxes was a bad ruler and a failure, just as we are told he was in the Greek sources. However, there were several crises that led to the assassination. A famine in 467 BCE saw the price of grain increase seven-fold and another defeat, this time at the Battle of Eurymedon, probably fought in 466 BCE, saw Persian influence wane further in the West (although not drastically so). Still, an assassination does not need to have flowed from abject failure - often they arise simply from the ambition of others. Artabanus (who had placed his seven sons in positions of power) may have planned to take the throne; one version (in Aristotle) has the conspirators kill both Darius, the crown prince, and Xerxes. Or it may have been Darius who was responsible - he was blamed by Artabanus. Xerxes' third son, Artaxerxes, put Artabanus and his sons to death and took the throne - even in the turmoil of assassination, Xerxes' succession was relatively stable. Artaxerxes I ruled for 40 years until 424 BCE.

Many factors in Xerxes' reign suggest stability more than the decline and immorality we find in the Greek sources that paint a picture of a moribund empire on the edge of collapse. The Persian Empire Xerxes left was stronger than when he'd inherited it (despite the defeats by the Greeks). The empire had lost no territory as a result of these defeats and Persia would remain the most dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean until the conquest of Alexander the Great in the 330s BCE - more than 130 years later.



BELOW Xerxes wanted to punish Athens for burning the temples at Sardis

MACEDONIA'S MADMAN

ALEXANDER

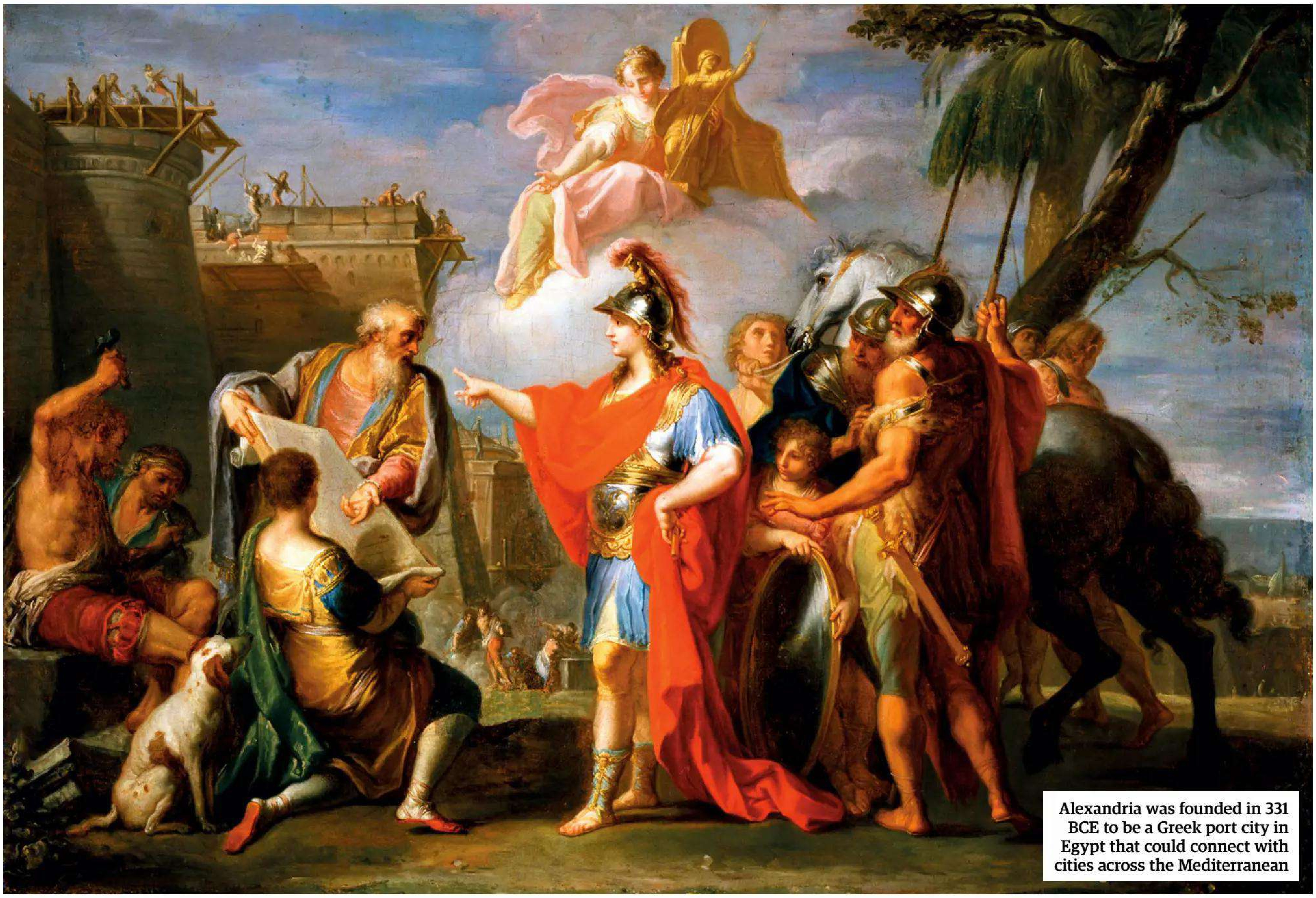
Did a twisted lust for power and bloodshed drive his world conquest?

Words **Paul Cartledge & Callum McKelvie**

EXPERT BIO

PAUL CARTLEDGE

Professor Paul Cartledge is AG Leventis Professor of Greek Culture at Cambridge University and a Fellow of Clare College. He has written several books over the last 30 years covering a wide range of ancient Greek subjects, including Alexander the Great, Sparta, the helots and the origins of democracy.



Alexandria was founded in 331 BCE to be a Greek port city in Egypt that could connect with cities across the Mediterranean

Some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. So wrote William Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*. He could have been thinking of Alexander of Macedon, son and successor of King Philip II, whom he did indeed explicitly mention in *Hamlet*. In a reign of 13 years (336-23 BCE), Alexander shot across the Greek and Middle Eastern firmament like a meteor, transforming whatever he - often brutally - touched and ensuring the ancient world, and so eventually our world, could never be the same again.

There have been many Alexanders, as many as there have been observers, enemies, admirers, worshippers or serious students of the man, hero, and god. It might be argued that we all create the Alexander of our dreams or nightmares. There are two main reasons for this multiplicity and plasticity of reception and response with regards to the action and temperament of Alexander.

First, and more poetically, Alexander's achievements - what the Romans (who admired and envied him equally) would have called his res gestae - were simply staggering: an eminently suitable case for treatment on the silver screen, as was most recently and not too happily done by the otherwise great filmmaker and screenwriter, Oliver Stone. Second, and (literally) prosaically, the surviving original narrative accounts of Alexander's life and campaigns are extremely partisan, skewed either very pro or very con.

The result is a paradox. Alexander himself went to unprecedented lengths to ensure that his achievements were properly received and appreciated in his own day - for example, he even appointed an official historian called Callisthenes, a relative of his former tutor Aristotle. Yet that particular relationship ended very badly indeed, in Callisthenes' execution for high treason. And neither his nor any contemporary account of Alexander's reign and (more or less the same thing) military campaigns has survived as such.

There are a few contemporary written documents, and there is much contemporary archaeology (buildings, sculptures, coins, graves and so on), but no diaries, no autobiography, and no objective, sober, factual contemporary or even near-contemporary account. Instead, we must rely, cautiously, on such sources as the much later biographer Plutarch (c.100 CE), whose robust *Life* is full of charm and anecdote and some insight. Or the even later historian-philosopher Arrian, a former student of the Stoic Epictetus and one who rose to high office in what by his day was the mighty Roman Empire - the empire that had by then long since absorbed the Greek-Oriental Empire so fleetingly created by Alexander.

Until the internet age, Alexander the Great was probably the most famous human being who ever lived. Both Julius Caesar and Augustus made pilgrimages to Alexander's tomb at the city in Egypt that he had founded and proudly named after himself, Alexandria. His astounding career of conquest inspired not just Caesar and Augustus but also Mark Antony, Napoleon, Hitler and other would-be world conquerors from the West. From the East too, in India alone, Lodi kings, Bengali sultans, and Nizams of Hyderabad were all named Sikander (Persian for Alexander). And, closer to Alexander's Macedonian home, a commanding succession of Ottoman Turkish rulers. Sultan Mehmet II had read Arrian's *The Campaigns Of Alexander* long before he captured

Illustration Joe Cummings **Image** Alamy

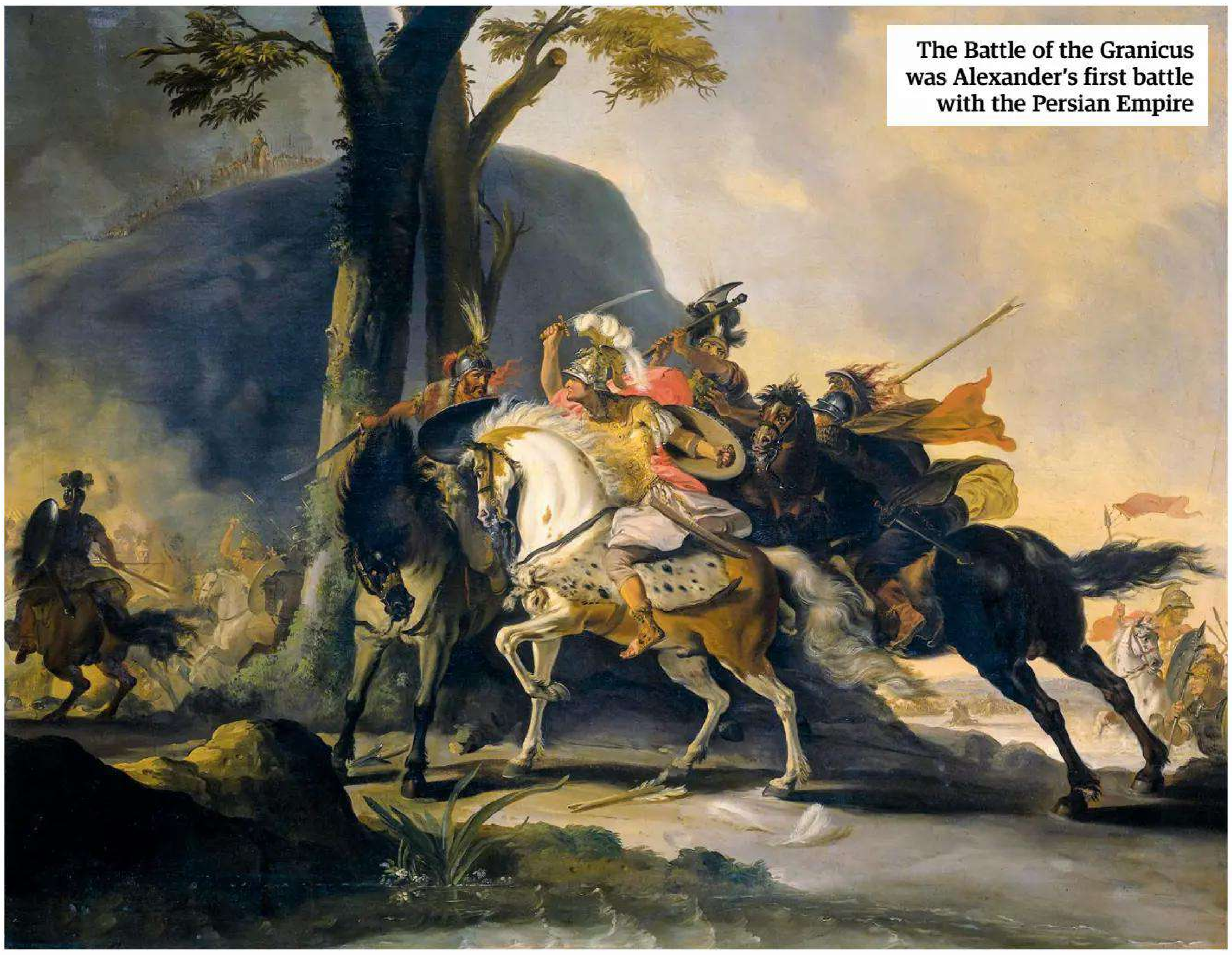
Constantinople in 1453 at the age of 20 (the age coincidentally at which Alexander acceded to the Macedonian throne). Mehmet's grandson, Selim I, who conquered Egypt for the Ottoman Empire, claimed "it has been revealed to me that I shall become the possessor of East and West, like Alexander the Great". Selim's son Suleiman the Magnificent actually declared himself "the second Alexander".

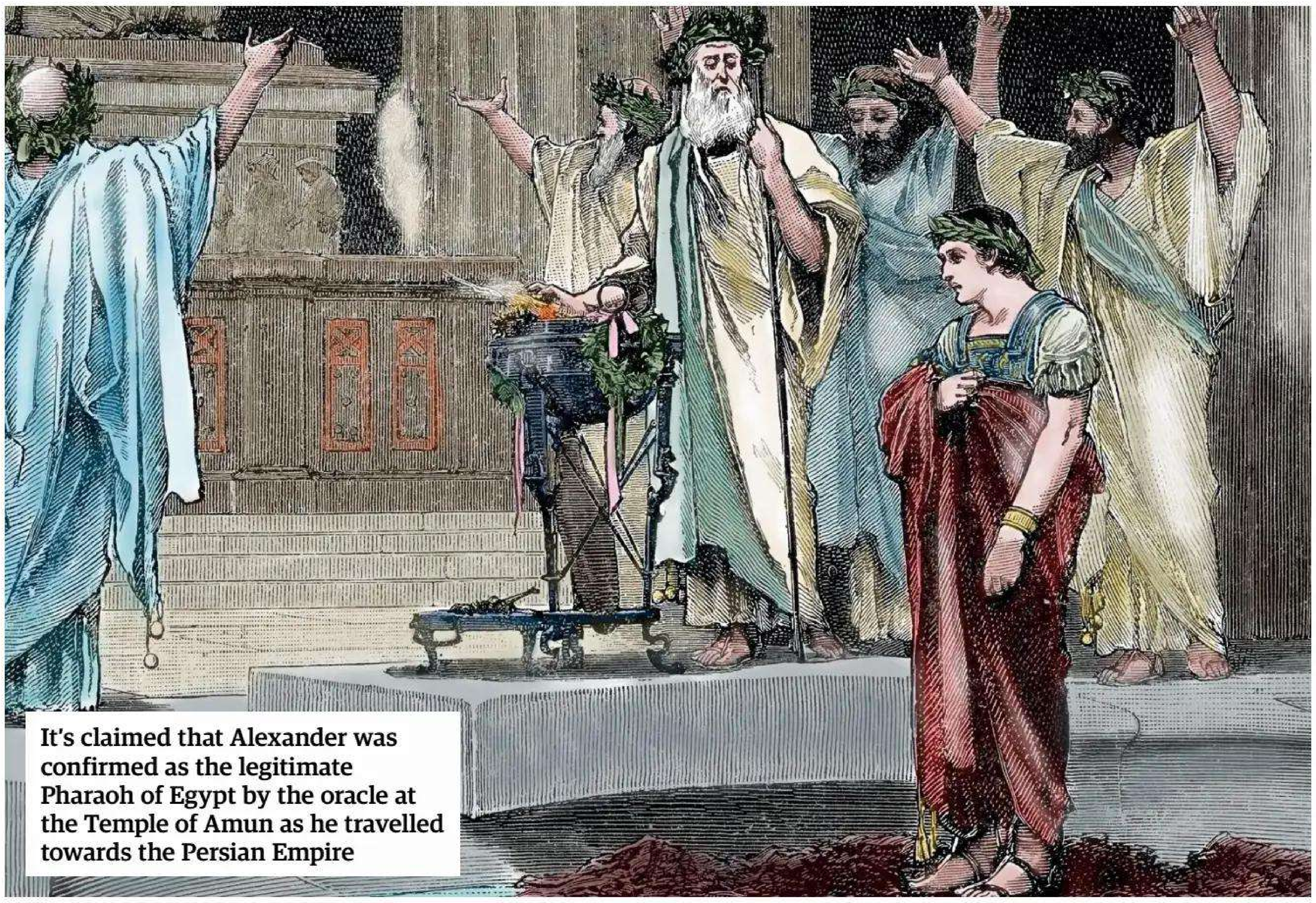
Few imperial careers, and none that lasted so few years, have had an impact as broad or as long-lasting. Here we shall concentrate on trying to demystify Alexander the Great (as he became known only after his death; to Greeks, he is 'Megalexandros' ('Greatalexander'), his greatness being so much part of him that it's now part of his very name). We shall be focusing on Alexander at the peak of his powers, having already conquered Egypt (332 BCE), Great King Darius III of Persia himself (at Gaugamela in October 331 BCE), and Babylon (330 BCE), and exploring the degree to which he was already building a legend of himself through his assimilation into those oriental, non-Greek or Macedonian cultures. A secondary question is more delicate and personal, and therefore even more difficult to answer: was the romanticised image of Alexander something that he himself cultivated in order to mask his bloodthirsty tendencies?

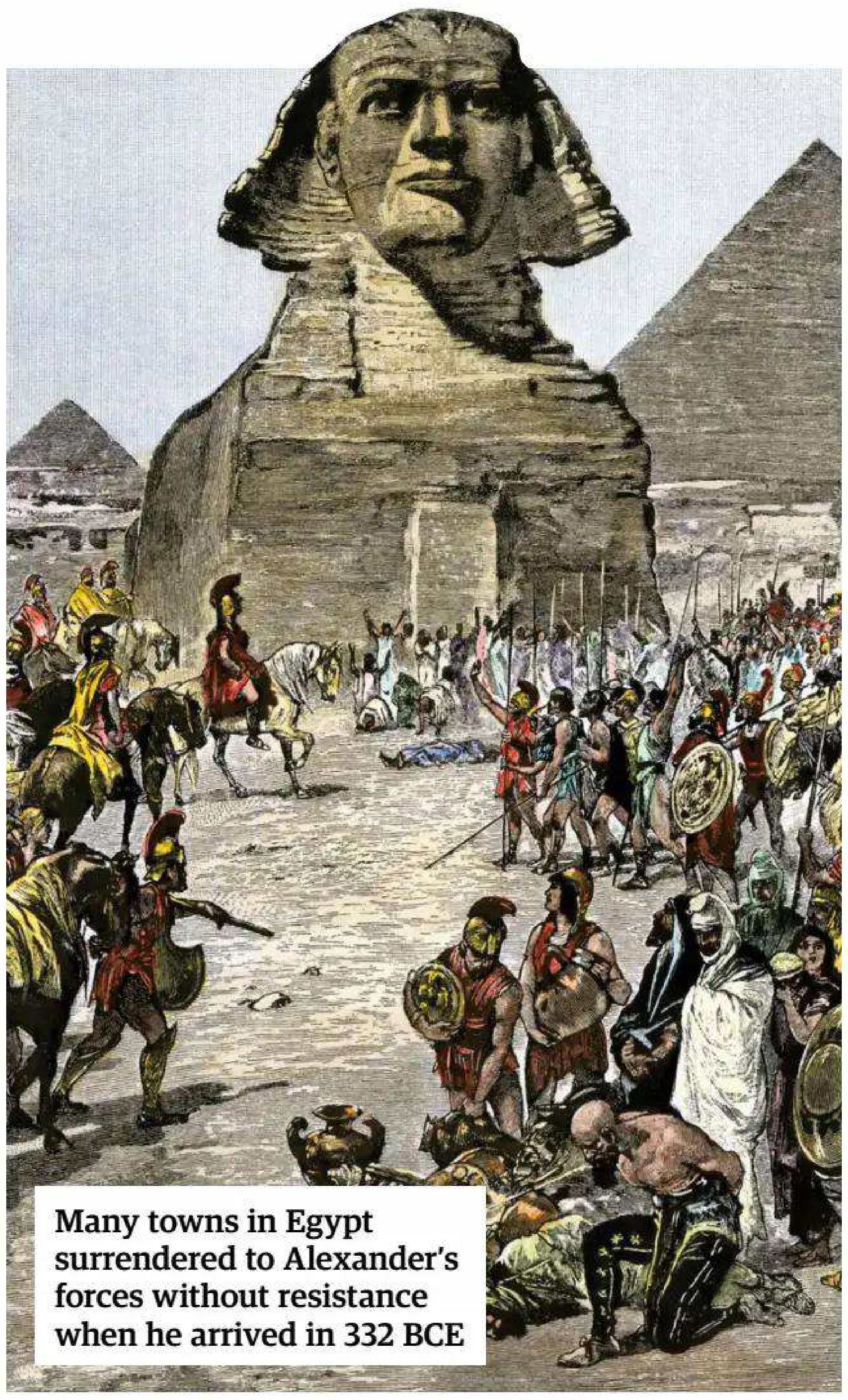
So – Alexander's 'orientalism'. That word today has acquired an unpleasant overtone of Western cultural superiority coupled with imperial aggrandisement at the expense of Rudyard Kipling's "lesser breeds without the law". To understand Alexander's orientalism, one has to think away such negative associations and remember that the Greeks had been in contact with part of the (Middle) East for many centuries before he was born. Alexander famously loved Homer, especially Homer's epic poem the *Iliad* with its magnificent champion Achilles at its heart. Alexander seems to have taken Achilles as a role model and inspiration, carrying with him on campaign through Asia a specially annotated copy of the text prepared for him by Aristotle. The Trojan War was in a sense a war between West and East, but Homer's Trojans, not least Prince Hector, were every bit as heroic as the Greeks, and the poem is not riddled with anti-oriental cultural prejudice, far from it. The earliest texts of the Homeric epics had been written down in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, in the then brand new alphabetic script that the Greeks had borrowed and adapted from the oriental Phoenicians of modern Lebanon, and which they even called 'Phoenician letters'.

Greeks and orientals were in regular contact and interaction thereafter, especially commercially, and in their everyday transactions they came to know about each other's gods. Gods in the plural, since – with the sole exception of the Jews of Palestine – all peoples of the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East in those days were polytheists. They were often also syncretists – that is, they borrowed from each other aspects of one or another god or goddess, so that Babylonian Ishtar became equated to Phoenician Astarte and she, in turn, became Greek Aphrodite. A written document on stone from Athens from Alexander's lifetime preserves a record of the official grant by the Athenians of a sanctified religious space in the port of Piraeus for Phoenician merchants to worship their 'Aphrodite'. So when Alexander, following in the footsteps of historian Herodotus a century earlier (he came from Halicarnassus, modern Bodrum), visited or rather besieged and conquered Phoenician Tyre, he was confident that the locals' chief god Melqart was the near-exact equivalent of his very own Greek Heracles.

That is crucially important, because Heracles (Roman Hercules) not only was a universal Greek object of worship, either as a hero or as a full-blown Olympian god, but was also a direct


The Battle of the Granicus was Alexander's first battle with the Persian Empire


It's claimed that Alexander was confirmed as the legitimate Pharaoh of Egypt by the oracle at the Temple of Amun as he travelled towards the Persian Empire



Many towns in Egypt surrendered to Alexander's forces without resistance when he arrived in 332 BCE

> *"Was the romanticised image of Alexander something that he himself cultivated?"*

ancestor of Alexander - in the literal sense that he considered himself to be physically descended from him and so, by extension, from almighty Zeus, Heracles' own father. Religion ('the things of the gods and goddesses' in Greek) was always for Alexander both a marker of his own self-development and self-image and also a key means of expressing and disseminating his kingly and imperial control. It was through religion that he made his West-East transition, almost seamlessly.

Dionysus, also known as Bacchus, was another Greek god for whom Macedonian Alexander expressed a particular attachment. A forerunner and ancestor of his, King Archelaus (reigned 413 to 400 BCE), had welcomed to his new court capital of Pella the great Athenian tragic playwright Euripides, who had composed there his rather terrifying *Bacchae* (or Bacchantes, female devotees of Dionysus). Alexander's own mother Olympias (a Molossian princess from Epirus, north-west Greece) was a kind of bacchante, so it was said, and she undoubtedly exercised a powerful hold over her son throughout his life. According to one Greek version of his myth, Dionysus was himself originally oriental. Even more relevantly for Alexander's outlook and ambitions, he like Heracles was supposed to have travelled as far east as the Greek geographical imagination could then stretch - to India.

India, what we today call the Punjab and Kashmir, was the scene of Alexander's final conquests in the mid-320s BCE before returning to Iran and Mesopotamia (where he died, at Babylon, in June 323 BCE, probably of natural causes but possibly due to foul play). His path of Asiatic conquest had begun 11 years earlier in today's north-west Turkey, where he passed over from Europe to Asia across the Hellespont/Dardanelles strait, in 334 BCE. At that point, Alexander was at his most 'Western'. He had his private and personal reasons, but his official reason for wanting to conquer the Achaemenid Persian Empire was to lead the allied Greeks in a war of liberation: to free forever from Persian control the Greek cities along the Anatolian coast and on the island of Cyprus, and in so doing also to exact revenge for the Persians' invasion of Greece under King Xerxes in 480-79 BCE.

The Persians had been defeated in 479 BCE, but not before they'd sacked Greek temples and shrines, most notoriously those atop the Athenians' Acropolis rock, including the predecessor of the Parthenon (which was constructed in part as a memorial of that Persian destruction, and Greek victory, especially at the naval battle of Salamis). Like the Greeks, the Persians were polytheists and had no ideological or theological issue with the Greeks' pantheon as such; the destructions were just intended to act as an effective way of making an imperial point. But due acknowledgement of the gods' power over humans was considered an essential part of what it meant to be Greek, and so it was in a spirit of panhellenism - all-Greekness - that Alexander stood forth as Hellenic champion in 334 BCE. He even went so far, but only very temporarily, as advocating and sanctioning the very un-oriental, and very Greek, political constitution of democracy as against Persian oriental despotism in the Greek cities of Asia, as well as their freedom from Persian imperial domination.

After winning his first two major battles against the massed, multi-ethnic forces of the Persian emperor Darius III (Granicus River, 334 BCE, and Issus, 333 BCE) and defeating the emperor's Phoenician navy at Tyre in 332 BCE, Alexander proclaimed himself the legitimate ruler of the ex-Persian Empire and dismissed Darius as a mere usurper. That was, shall we say, just a touch premature - if entirely typical of Alexander's self-belief and confident propaganda,

LOVE LIFE OF ALEXANDER

Supposedly scorning sensual pleasures, there were some people with whom he shared his softer side

HEPHASESTION

Alexander's closest friend, there is much to suggest that their relationship was significantly more intimate. Lucian writes of Hephaestion suggesting he had been in Alexander's tent all night, and once Diogenes of Sinope accused the latter of being "ruled by Hephaestion's thighs".

CAMPASPE

Thought to be a prominent citizen of Larissa in Thessaly, evidence suggests she could've been intimate with Alexander and was one of his concubines. Roman scholar Aellan hints Alexander lost his virginity to Campaspe. It's also said he presented her to the painter Apelles.

BARSINE

A Persian noblewoman, Plutarch believes she and Alexander were lovers and had a son, Heracles. But he only appears 12 years after Alexander's death, becoming involved in succession battles before vanishing. Evidence suggests he wasn't Alexander's son.

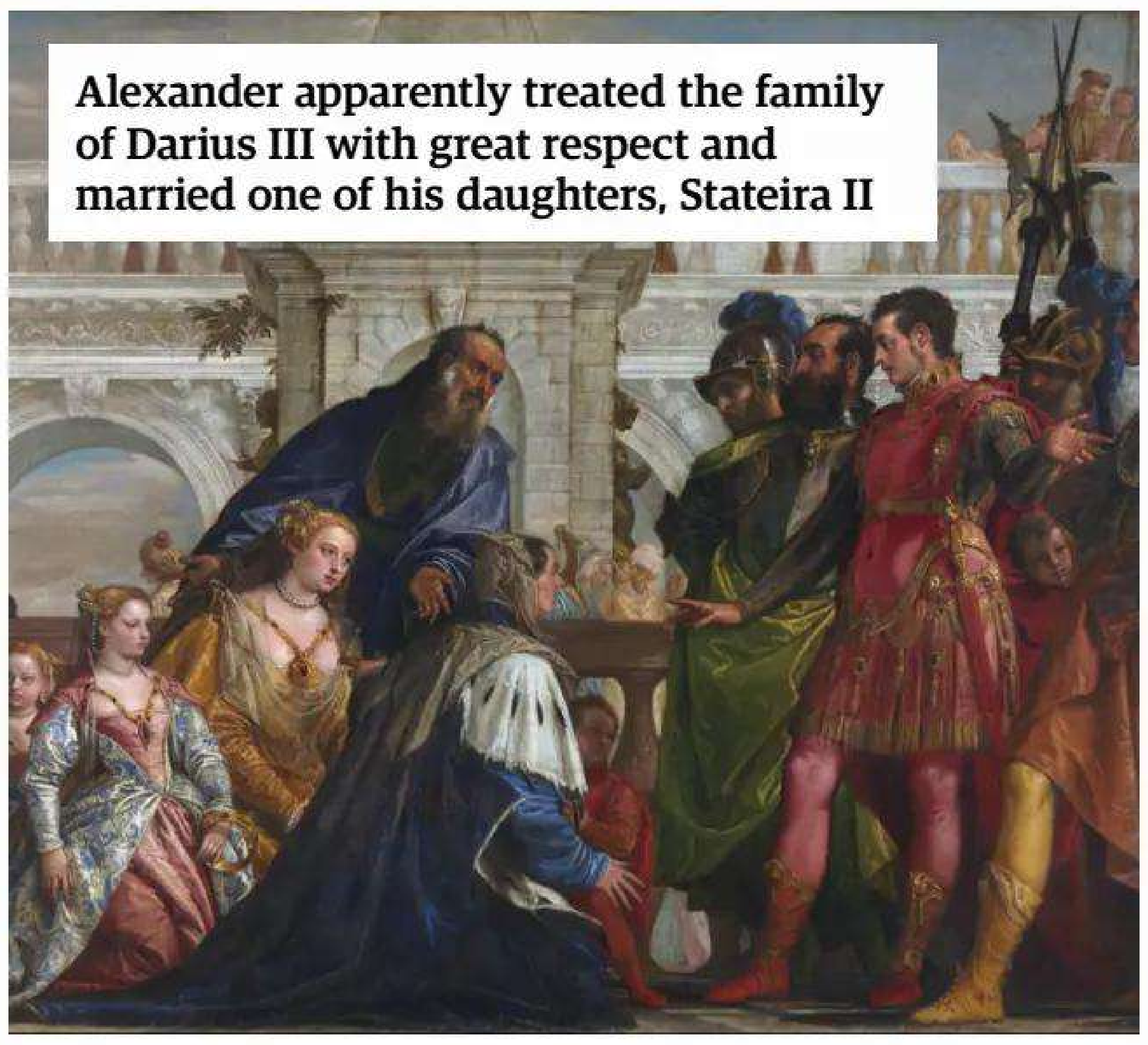
ROXANA

Contemporary historians write that Alexander was determined to make her his consort. When he died, she murdered his two other wives to keep her own position. She gave birth to Alexander IV, who may or may not have been his son. Both were assassinated under orders from Cassander.

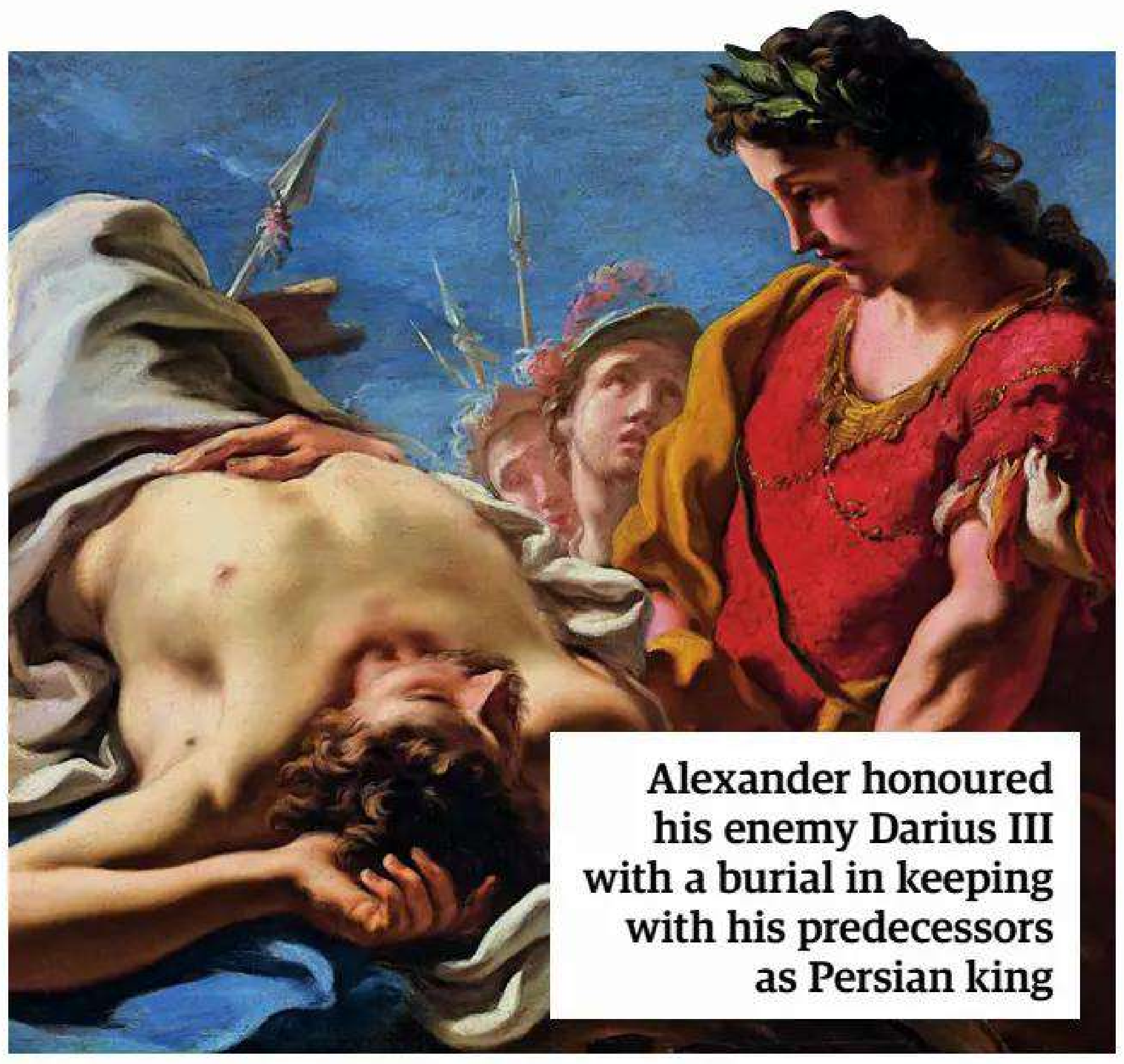
BAGOAS

A Persian eunuch, one story states that after Bagoas won a dancing contest Alexander embraced him and kissed him passionately. Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus states Bagoas exploited his position and used Alexander's affection for him to settle grudges.

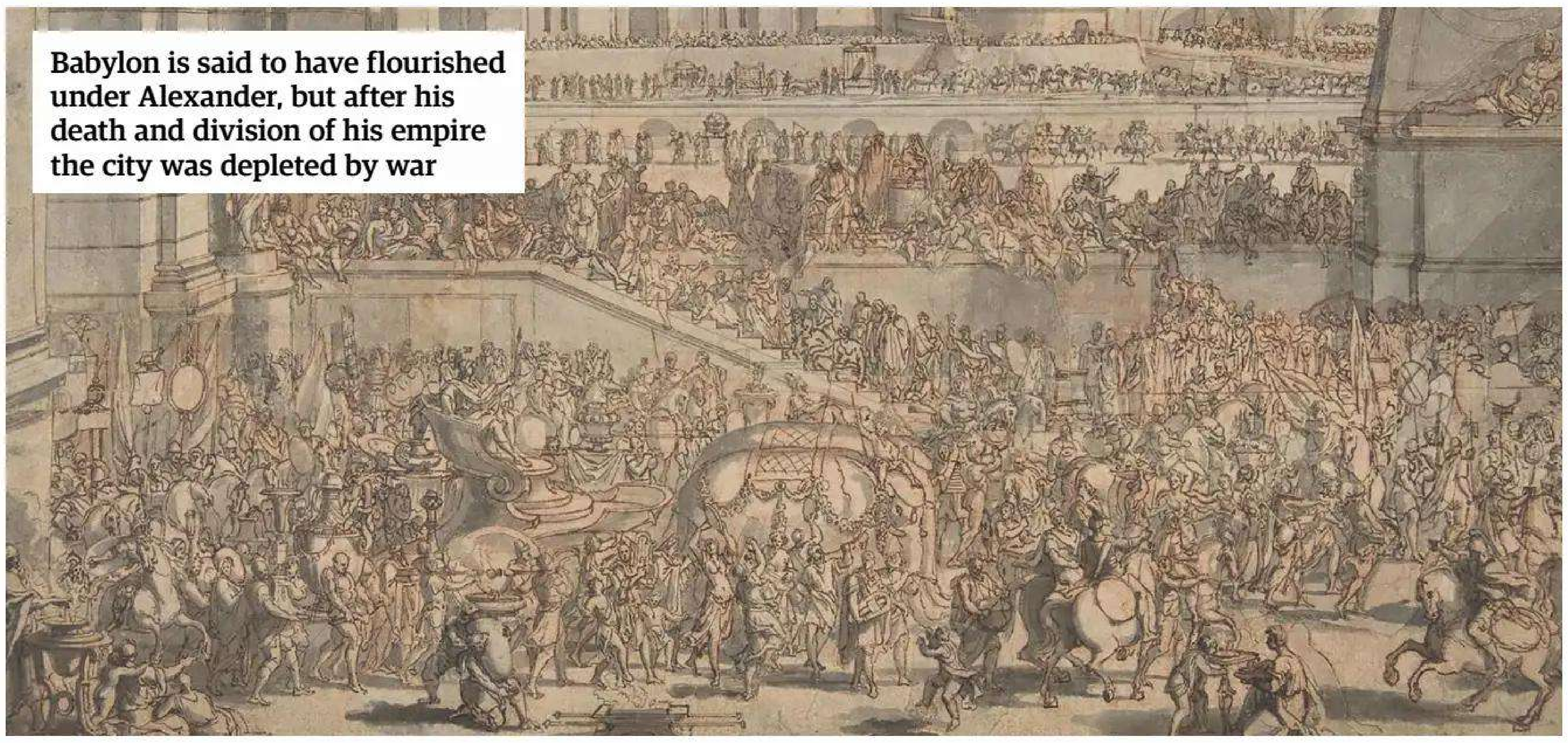
Images Alamy, Getty Images



Alexander apparently treated the family of Darius III with great respect and married one of his daughters, Stateira II



Alexander honoured his enemy Darius III with a burial in keeping with his predecessors as Persian king



Babylon is said to have flourished under Alexander, but after his death and division of his empire the city was depleted by war

> *"Alexander assumed power as the legitimate successor to the previous native dynasty"*

based ultimately on his unshakeable faith that he was destined to become 'King of Kings' (as Persian rulers officially styled themselves). From the Levant, he moved westwards into north Africa, to Egypt, which the Persians had first conquered as long ago as 525 BCE but had lost to native revolt for some 60 years from 404 BCE and had only recently reconquered in 343/2 BCE. Alexander was welcomed in Egypt as a liberator, rather as the Muslim Arabs were to be a millennium or so later, and it was here that he first gave unambiguously clear signs of his extreme orientalism - of the distance he was preparing and prepared to put between traditional Macedonian Greek kingship and his ultimate, reshaped and reconceived future as an oriental-style monarch and emperor.

Almost certainly he had himself crowned pharaoh in the old Egyptian capital of Memphis, thereby not only ingratiating himself with the Egyptian masses but also enfolding the old and still powerful Egyptian priesthood in the embrace of his new Egyptian monarchy. But the starkest and strangest development, possibly the most determinative single episode of his reign, occurred not in the Nile valley but some 250 kilometres (155 miles) further east on the borders with Libya, at an oasis called Siwah. Here lay an oracular shrine devoted to the god whom the Greeks spelt Ammon, but who was to the Egyptians Amun - as in, for example, Tut-ankh-amun. The march through the desert was long and difficult, and Darius poised with a huge army in Asia was still very much unfinished business - so why did Alexander undertake this perilous side trip?

The sources of evidence fail us at this crucial juncture, telling us different, often conflicting or even contradictory stories. Alexander was by no means the first Greek to want to consult Ammon. Ammon had long been identified syncretistically with the mighty Greek Zeus, who had an oracular shrine of his own on the Greek mainland, at Olympia. The Spartan admiral Lysander, conqueror of the Athenians in 405/4 BCE, was the most notable of his Greek predecessor consultants, not coincidentally a man who had received worship in his lifetime as a god. Alexander may have asked Ammon about his birth and lineage, in other words about his past, but almost certainly he was just as interested, if not more so, in his future - and whether or not he would indeed rule 'the world' (after beating Darius of course). And in what capacity - as a man or a god? All that he was ever prepared to divulge of what he was told was that he had learned what his heart desired.

From Siwah Alexander retraced his steps eastwards, and by the late autumn of 331 BCE he was in position to face up to Darius's overwhelmingly larger army in a giant, climactic battle fought at Gaugamela, not far from Erbil and Mosul in today's Iraqi Kurdistan. Alexander's stunning victory - due, as usual, to the strategic and logistical genius as well as executive proficiency and extreme personal bravery of the commander-in-chief - in effect opened up to him the rest of the Persian Empire, then extending as far east into central Asia as Afghanistan. The first stop was Iran - Media in the north, Persia in the south - the Achaemenid heartland, the location of the mighty palaces and treasure-houses of Ecbatana, Pasargadae, Susa and Persepolis. Persian and especially Zoroastrian lore and myth hold that Alexander behaved rather like a Xerxes in reverse, deliberately destroying Persian shrines and sacred books. To the extent that that accusation has any basis, it was the last such occasion on which Alexander could be thought of as setting his face against oriental religion and culture, or despising or exploiting oriental non-Greeks as such. Rather the contrary.

As in Egypt, so in Iran, Alexander assumed regal power as the legitimate successor to the previous native dynasty. He took to wearing a slightly modified version of Persian royal dress (he drew the line at wearing trousers or pantaloons since Greeks considered them effeminate), accompanied by Persian regalia, symbols of royal power. More controversially, and in a more Greek than Persian manner, he struck up an intimate relationship with a Persian eunuch; it had been a little more obviously acceptable to Persian manners when he had earlier slept with and had a son with a high-ranking Persian woman called Barsine, a son whom they named Heracles.

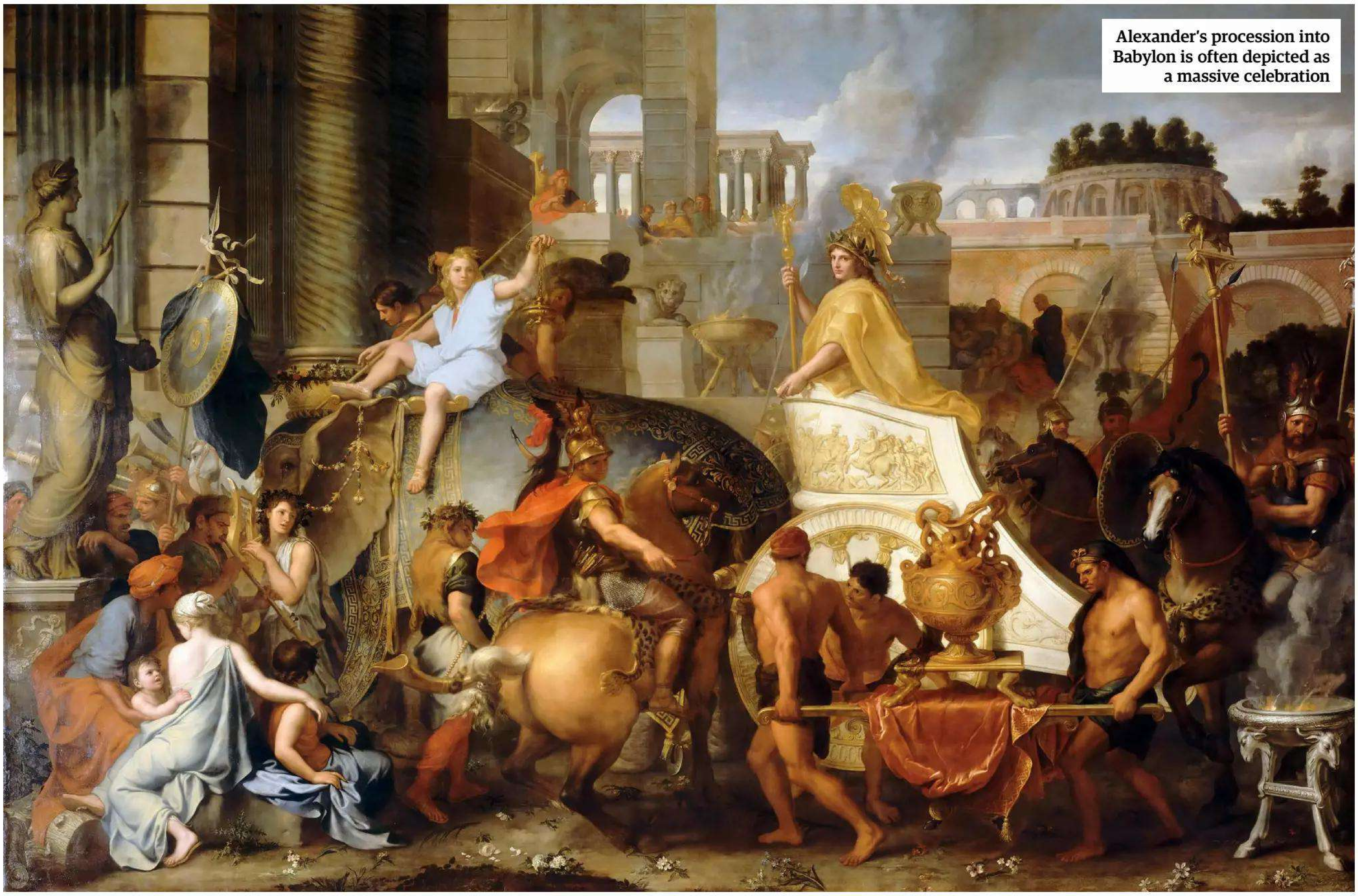
But in the end, it was not Persia that seems to have most attracted Alexander as the principal seat of his future power, but the ancient city of Babylon in what is now southern Iraq. After the Siwah visitation, the next most significant event bearing on Alexander's self-conception as an oriental king was his relationship with the Persian viceroy Mazaeus. A viceroy who possibly by pre-arrangement with Alexander, possibly not, betrayed his master Darius III at Gaugamela to be most handsomely rewarded by Alexander with the satrapy (provincial governorship) of Babylonia and its most splendid court at Babylon.

Mazaeus, though Persian, went 'native', taking a Babylonian wife and giving their children names based on that of the Babylonians' chief god Bel-Marduk. In so doing, he may even have inspired Alexander, who went on to take three Iranian wives simultaneously (very un-Hellenic but not entirely un-Macedonian Greek) and to encourage or rather force his elite companions to do likewise, marrying them according to Persian, not Greek, rites. It is an intriguing thought that the so-called Satrap's or Alexander Sarcophagus from Sidon, now in the Istanbul Museum, may have originally contained the corpse of Mazaeus since on its exterior is carved in stone relief one of the finest near-contemporary representations of Alexander himself. And it was of course at Babylon, aptly enough though not according to plan, that Alexander was to die and initially be embalmed and buried in 323 BCE.

Alexander's untimely death, without any provision having been made for a smooth succession, opened the floodgates for two generations of warfare among his marshals, generals and lieutenants for their slice of his hypertrophied empire. In 321 BCE one of the contenders who was to profit the most, Alexander's boyhood friend and self-serving memoirist Ptolemy, managed to hijack Alexander's corpse near Damascus. He first transferred it to Memphis and thence to his new capital city that Alexander had had time only to found in principle - Alexandria, capital of the Ptolemaic kingdom from 305 BCE until the death of its last queen, Cleopatra, in 30 BCE. This is the appropriate moment to reopen one of the most sensitive of all the questions around the metaphorical corpse of the historical Alexander: to what extent did he cultivate a romanticised image of himself in order to mask his bloodthirsty tendencies?

There's no question but that he was bloodthirsty. Indeed, some historians today think he was uniquely and unnecessarily motivated by bloodlust, whereas others might gauge the extent of the blood he spilt against the vast size of the empire he created and the heterogeneous nature of the opposition he inevitably encountered in creating it. Nor is there any question but that he sedulously cultivated an image of himself as a divinely appointed and divinely gifted world-ruler. Official artists (sculptors such as Lysippus, painters such as Apelles, gem-cutters such as Pyrgoteles) were laid under contribution, for a handsome fee of course, as was an official historian. That proved a poisoned chalice when the historian chose to oppose one of his master and employer's most cherished moves, the integration of his Macedonian-Greek and Persian courts by way of the ritual of proskynesis, obeisance or the kowtow.

The question therefore is whether Alexander thought of himself as especially bloodthirsty, or whether he thought that others so perceived him, to the extent that it might be counted as an obstacle to, rather than an enabler of, his rule. This author's feeling is that he did not and that others did not either. The ancient world as a whole was a good deal more brutal than gentler ages find it easy to comprehend. In any case, the specifically romantic - as opposed to heroic - image of Alexander was a much much later, posthumous creation. The Alexander Romance had its origins only in the high Roman imperial period and really flowered only in the European Middle Ages. It is difficult enough for us to get any sort of accurate grasp of Alexander's mentality without introducing extraneous, anachronistic considerations.



Alexander's procession into Babylon is often depicted as a massive celebration

Images Alamy, wiki/National Gallery (Darius family), wiki/Museum Kunstpalast (Darius body), wiki/Louvre Museum (enters Babylon)

Mauryan Empire, 268-232 BCE

EMPEROR ASHOKA

While Ashoka began his reign as a bloodthirsty conqueror, he soon had a change of heart, creating the world's first welfare state

Words **Hareth Al Bustani**

At the start of his reign, India's King Ashoka seemed destined to become one of history's great conquerors. Instead, having spilt much blood to seize and expand his realm, he did something far more remarkable - he disavowed violence.

This is all the more spectacular considering his lineage. His grandfather, Chandragupta, was a brilliant warrior who commanded a mercenary band in the service of Alexander the Great, before overthrowing India's Nanda kingdom and establishing his dynasty, the Maurya, in 322 BCE. He united the subcontinent's north and west, kicking the Macedonians out - with an army of 600,000 men, 8,000 elephants and 30,000 cavalry - and ruled over the subcontinent's greatest empire for a quarter of a century.

Indian society was governed by an increasingly rigid caste system, topped by the Brahmin class of Vedic priests. Though Chandragupta was born to a lower caste, he filled his court with Brahmin. His son, Bindusara, went on to subjugate the subcontinent's south, cutting through the Deccan plateau, into Mysore - earning himself the nickname 'Enemy-Slayer'. Although he failed to capture the kingdom of Kalinga to the east, he apparently fathered 101 children, naming his eldest son, Sushima, his heir. One of his numerous dalliances resulted in a boy named Ashoka, a child who seemed set for a life of misery and obscurity. Not only did he suffer from a skin condition that left him "rough and unpleasant to touch", but he was prone to fainting and fits of epilepsy.

His afflictions made him a wicked youth, supposedly burning his entire harem alive after hearing them gossiping about his skin. Short and stout, he depended on his wits and allied with his father's chief minister, with whom he schemed against his brothers. To use these skills and keep his son at arm's length, the king sent Ashoka to put down a rebellion in the north-west province of Taxila.

> *"Legend tells how Ashoka killed his half-brothers one-by-one, sparing only his uterine sibling"*

Ashoka forged alliances with two mountain leaders of Kashmir so successfully, that his father named him the viceroy of Ujjain. There, he met Devi, a merchant's daughter and committed Buddhist, and defied convention by marrying her for love. Back in the capital, Sushima had caused an uproar by slapping a senior minister on the back of his bald head, for comedic effect. Fearing the fickle whims of the future king, the courtiers had his rival claimant Ashoka recalled to the capital. Leaving his lowly wife and children behind, Ashoka returned and married Asandhimitra, from a small kingdom north of modern Delhi, naming her his chief queen. Sushima, meanwhile, was sent to suppress another revolt in Taxila.

In 274 BCE, the king fell ill and ordered Sushima to return, instructing Ashoka to take his place. Desperate to remain in the capital at this critical juncture, Ashoka feigned sickness, and had the chief minister intercept the message to Sushima. Incensed, he then confronted his father and demanded to be named regent in a manner so shocking, that the emperor supposedly had an epileptic fit and died. When Sushima finally arrived, he found his half-brother defended by a wall of Greek mercenaries. According to the Mahayana Buddhist account, the chief minister dug a ditch within the eastern gate, filled it with coals and covered it with reeds and dirt, before encouraging the crown prince to seize his throne. As Sushima rushed into the unguarded eastern gate, he tripped into the fiery hole, enduring a slow, painful demise.

In the next four years, legend tells how Ashoka killed his remaining 98 half-brothers one by one, sparing only his uterine sibling, Vitashoka. Having wiped out all other male heirs, he enjoyed the coronation rites. During the ritual, he was cleansed, anointed and consecrated by

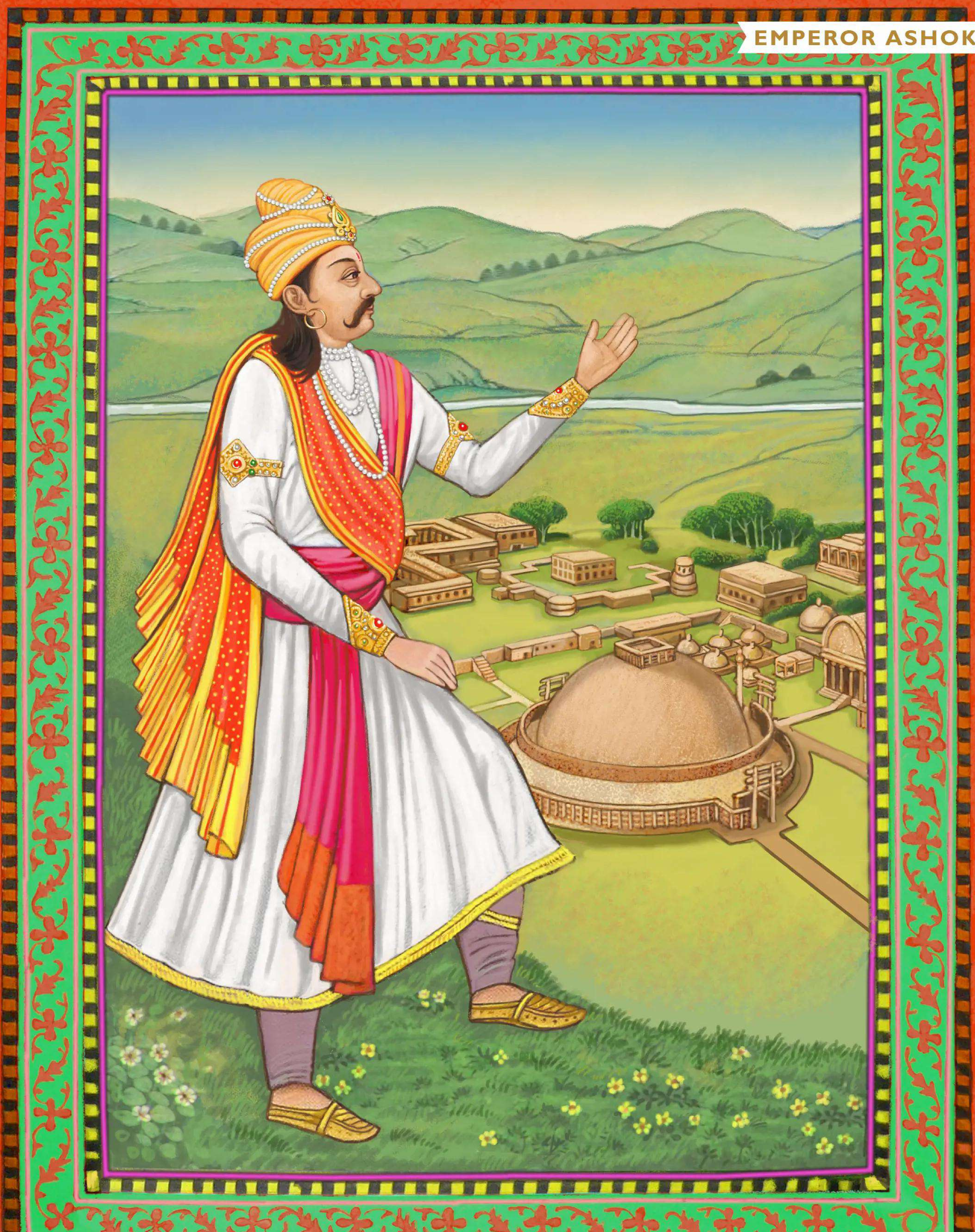


Illustration Bob Venables

Brahmin priests, emerging as a king of divine authority. Now he was the physical embodiment of Dharma itself – the cosmic truth. Adopting his grandfather's title, Devanampriya, 'Beloved of the gods', and the regal name Priyadasi, or 'Beloved to behold', he appointed his younger brother vice-regent. Ashoka went on to have five wives and lots of concubines, fathering many children.

He took quickly to leadership, assessing the affairs of the realm, receiving gold revenues, appointing officials, overseeing military exercises and even going hunting. He nominated four princes to serve as viceroys, overseeing the district officers, mahamatras – who, in turn, managed a further group of subordinates. Cities were run by commissioners with judicial powers.

Ashoka's early years were ruled with an iron fist, as he received daily briefings from a far-reaching intelligence network of spies. One account tells of how he built a 'Hell Prison', which looked beautiful on the outside, but was filled with the 'five great agonies' of Hell. He allegedly appointed a man called Chandagirika his chief executioner, only to later have him tortured to death.

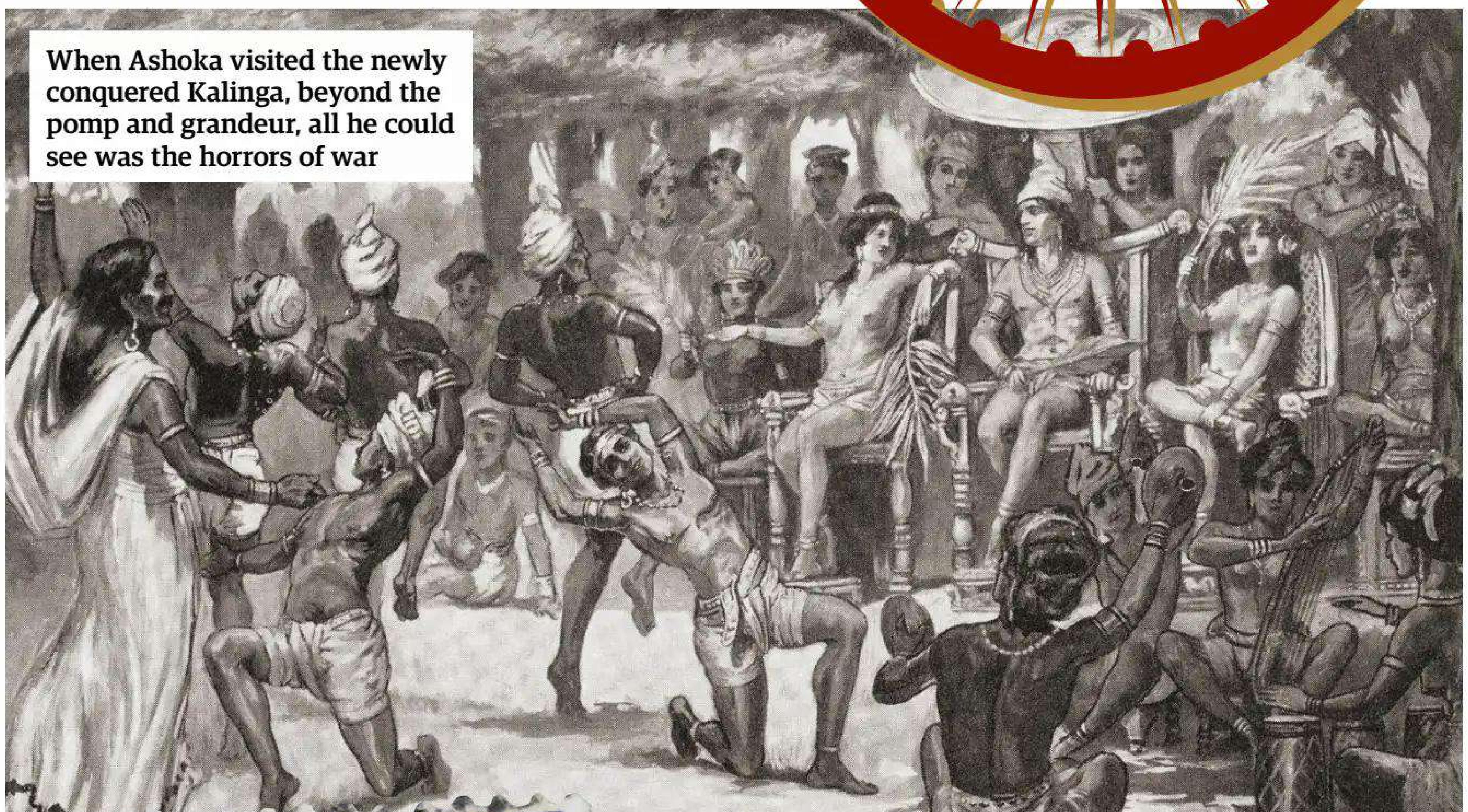
Although he loved meat, in 265 BCE – whether under the influence of his mother, his first wife or a young monk who survived his 'Hell' – he converted to Buddhism. It was a political masterstroke that allowed him to whittle away the Brahmin caste's influence, by transitioning their authority away to the Buddhists.

He began replacing the 60,000 Brahmin on his payroll with 60,000 Buddhist monks. However, it would be a few years before he took his new faith seriously enough to give up his beloved peacock meat. During this transition, in his eighth year in power, eager to accomplish what his father could not, the king went against the tenets of his newfound faith and invaded the unconquered eastern kingdom of Kalinga.

The ensuing war would prove far bloodier than he could have imagined. Although the king succeeded in subjugating and drawing Kalinga within his yoke, 100,000 were killed and 150,000 displaced. Even amidst the glory of conquest, as he toured his new province, the human toll shocked Ashoka to his core. Rather than pride, he simply felt grief and shame.

Hurling himself deeper into Buddhism, he disavowed violence, and began a second phase of leadership, 'Ashoka Dharma'. He commemorated this transformation in 260 BCE, with a public display of piety, inscribing the first of many 'Rock Edicts', pronouncing his conversion to Buddhism. These would later culminate in the Pillar Edicts, inscribed pillars of magnificent polished stone, crowned by lions, bulls and elephants, sat atop the Wheel of Moral Law.

The king sometimes spent most of the year touring the empire, inscribing rock faces in the subcontinent's first written script, Brahmi,


When Ashoka visited the newly conquered Kalinga, beyond the pomp and grandeur, all he could see was the horrors of war

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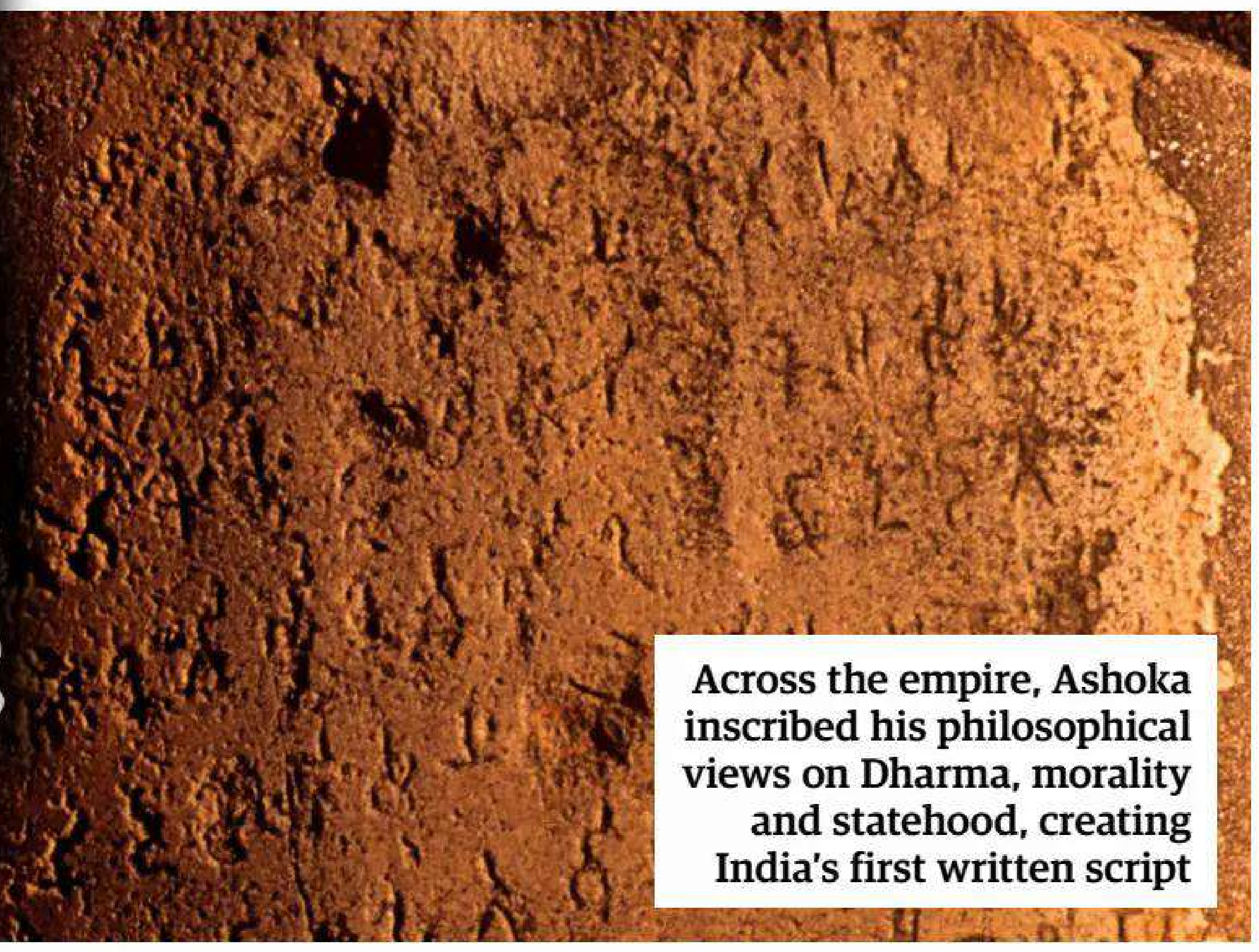
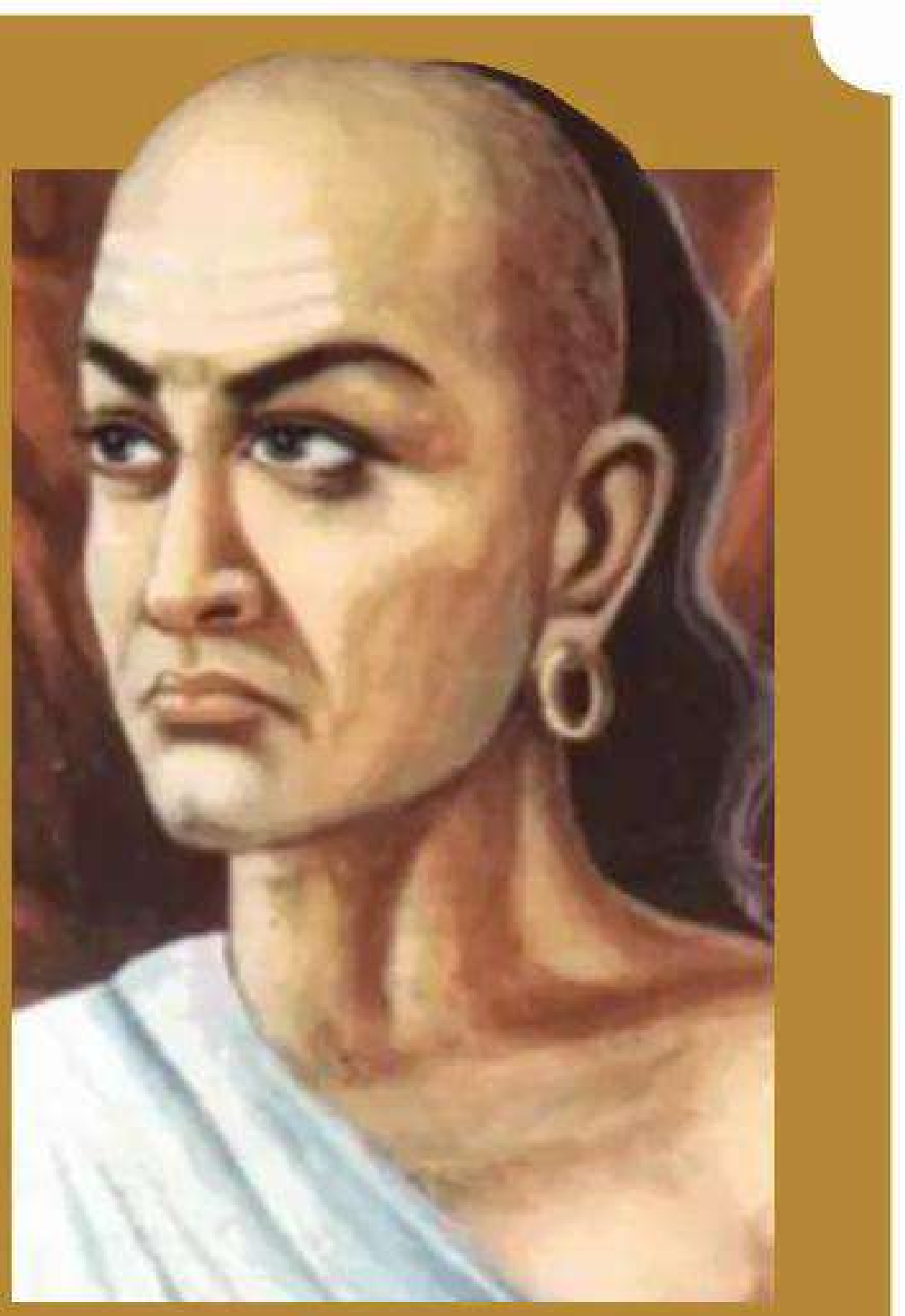
The Pillar Edicts were topped by lions, sat over the Wheel of the Moral Law, an image seen across modern India


Across the empire, Ashoka inscribed his philosophical views on Dharma, morality and statehood, creating India's first written script

THE ORIGINAL MACHIAVELLI

The Mauryan dynasty began with a genius, determined to deliver his empire from danger, and hell-bent on revenge



Chanakya was born to a Brahman family in Taxila – a centre of culture and learning where the finest minds studied science, economics, law, medicine and warfare.

A teacher's son, the genius became a professor himself at a young age, and political studies led him to believe that India's Nanda kingdom was in a dangerously vulnerable state. He worried the entire realm would collapse if invaded. Desperate, he travelled east to the capital of Pataliputra, to advise the Nanda king, only to find him a manipulative tyrant. The experiment was a disaster, with Chanakya fleeing disguised as a Jain ascetic – eventually coming across a brash young boy called Chandragupta.

Taking the lad under his wing, he gave him a holistic education, hoping to mould him into the ideal ruler. As the two amassed financial support, they mounted a failed direct attack on the Nanda. Soon after, the duo watched a mother scold her son for eating the hot centre of a bun, rather than the cool edges – prompting a strategy change. Shoring up allies in the Himalayas, they attacked the outskirts of the kingdom, carving it up piece by piece, before taking the capital itself and sending the Nanda king fleeing. Chandragupta was appointed king, creating the Maurya dynasty and ruling in the mould of Chanakya's design. Chanakya, nicknamed Kautilya or 'the Crow Like', went on to pen Arthashastra, 'Treatise on State Economy', outlining his theories on statehood, rulership, political economy and international relations – ideas that would survive well into the British Raj.

developed to communicate his mother tongue of Prakrit. This gave him the means to speak directly with his subjects. He also delivered a fascinating array of philosophical, heartfelt and unfiltered musings – a far cry from the modern politician's sanitised public statement.

One of his rocks expressed remorse for the invasion of Kalinga, lamenting: "Peasants who behave with humility towards their friends, servants and labourers are killed in wars and separated from their loved ones". The king added, "This has distressed me considerably. Why should this happen?". He then vowed to eschew thoughts of war and direct all his energies to Dharma, encouraging future generations to do the same. "The triumph of Dharma is superior to the triumph of war."

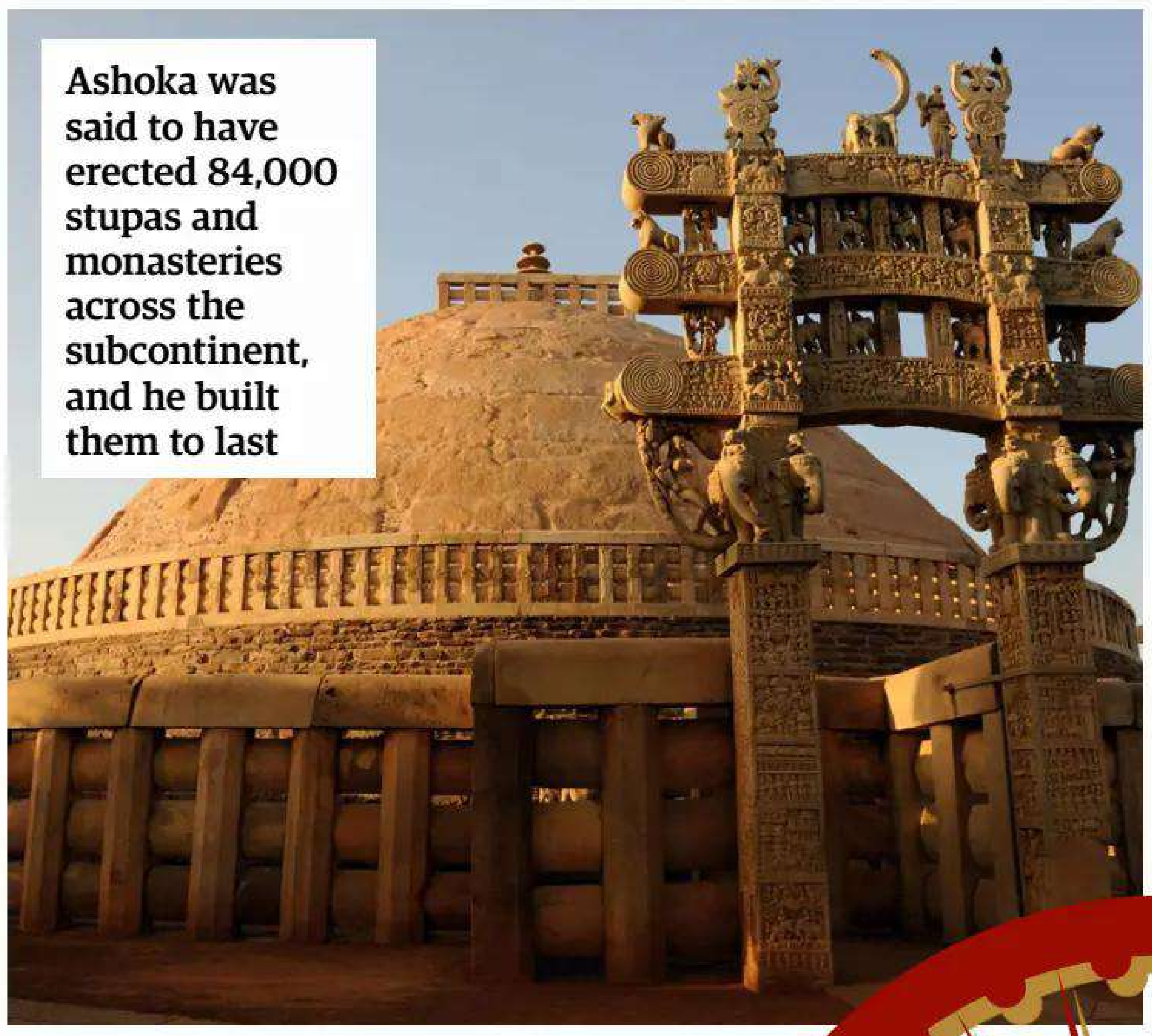
As he became consumed by his Buddhist faith, this idea of Dharma developed into a leading tenet of his leadership. He sought not to enforce the Buddhist notion of Dharma upon the empire, but instead to create a society governed by a universal force of mutual respect and kindness – or as he put it, "All men are my children". It was a system of civic ethics, rather than a state religion. In one edict, he denounced the "meaningless rituals", synonymous with Brahmanic worship, instead encouraging people to adopt rituals and customs of "respect for elders" and "treating all living creatures well" – including the slaves and labourers.

He insisted that "there should be restraint in preaching one's faith", adding that "a person who praises his own faith and derides the faith of others is actually bringing his faith into disrepute". After all, Buddha himself had said it was behaviour, not birth, that determined whether one was a "priest or an outcast". While all this disgusted the Brahmin, they were enraged most by his edict denouncing animal sacrifice. Ashoka confessed that while his royal kitchens killed two peacocks and a deer daily to make curry, these too would soon be spared.

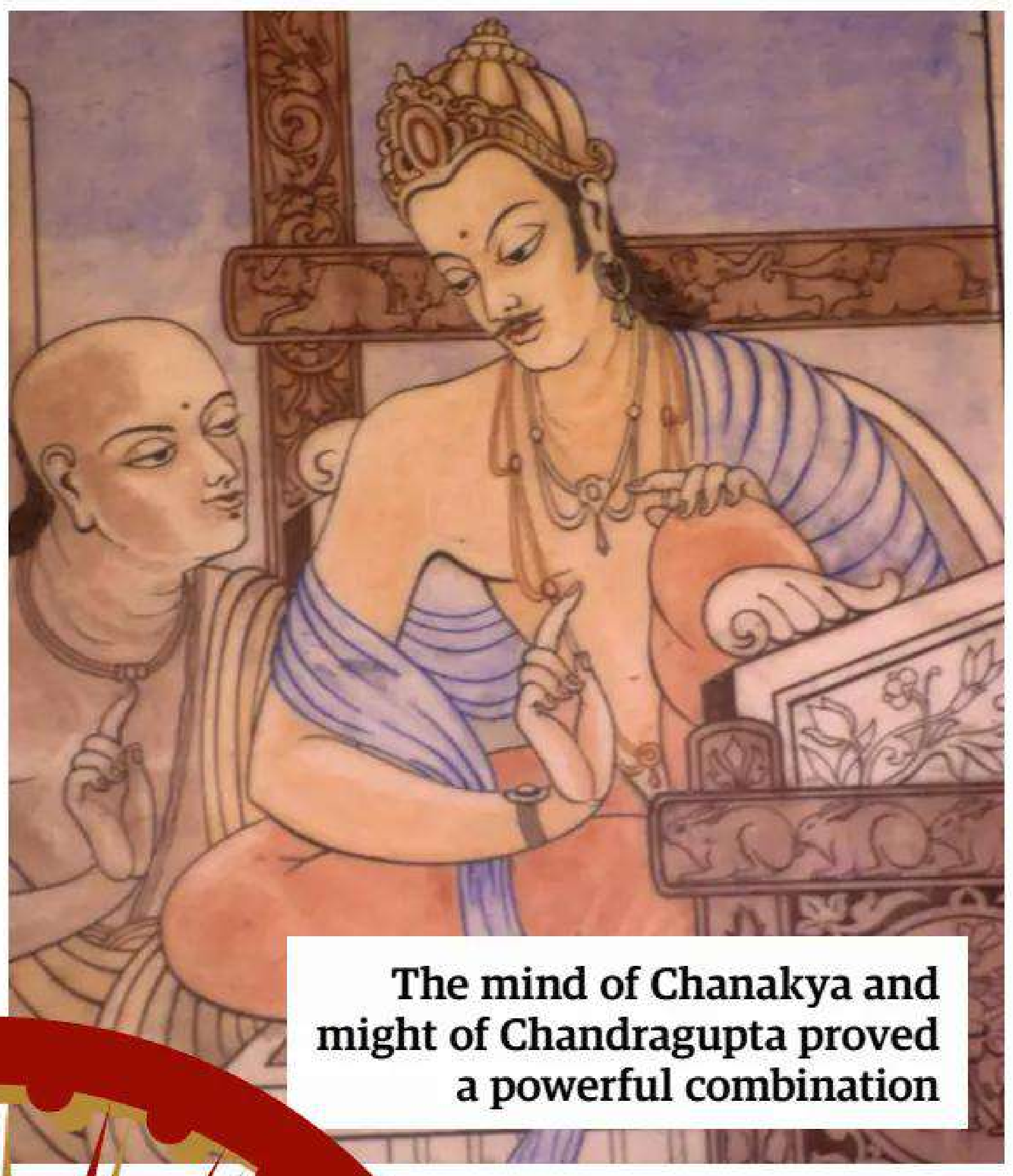
During this new phase of governance, Ashoka's political administration largely resembled his grandfather's. His mahamatras travelled the empire five times a year, checking officials weren't abusing their posts. When Ashoka's brother was caught taking liberties with his vice-regency, he was forced to resign, and become a Buddhist hermit. Ashoka also had officials and employees on the payroll, collecting taxes from peasants, artisans and merchants, and holding lawbreakers to account. He was firm but fair; not only abolishing the death penalty, but offering amnesty on his birthday and the anniversary of his coronation, releasing certain prisoners.

In 254 BCE, the king sent a minister to mediate a dispute between Buddhists and the Nirgrantha, a sect of Jain ascetics who refused to wear clothes. When the minister was killed, Ashoka called together the Third Buddhist Council at his capital of Pataliputra, to streamline the various Buddhist sects and codify what was considered doctrinally correct. He then began a widespread programme of proselytising – sending monks across the region, bearing the accepted doctrine.

> *"He sought not to enforce Dharma upon the empire, but to create a society governed by mutual respect and kindness"*



Ashoka was said to have erected 84,000 stupas and monasteries across the subcontinent, and he built them to last



The mind of Chanakya and might of Chandragupta proved a powerful combination

As he grew older, Ashoka became increasingly dedicated to the Sangha, the Buddhist community. He apparently built 84,000 stupas and monasteries across the realm, one for each of the Buddhist discourses. Rather than mud and plaster, they were built to last with brick and stone. He supposedly gifted 100,000 gold pieces to every monastery, 100,000 to the site of Buddha's birth, and 100,000 to the Bodhi tree where Buddha received enlightenment.

The king also revived the magnificent Pancavarsika festival, reimagining it in line with his Buddhist faith. At the end of the proceedings, he erected a platform around the Bodhi tree and poured milk over it, infused with sandalwood, saffron, camphor and perfume, from 5,000 gold, silver, crystal and tiger's-eye pitchers.

After the king's chief queen and mother of his beloved heir, Kunala, died, her spot was filled by Tishyarakshita – an anti-Buddhist, who had supposedly tried to destroy the Bodhi tree. Either angered at Kunala for rejecting a sexual advance, or hoping to elevate her own son, she apparently doctored one of the king's orders, having his heir blinded while he was putting down a rebellion in Taxila. When Kunala clawed his way back to the capital, sans eyes, the chief minister had the queen killed, and her anti-Buddhist conspirators executed or banished. Ineligible, Kunala's son Samprati was named heir in his stead.

As Ashoka neared his seventies, and his health began to fail, he planned a second Pancavarsika festival – spending 400,000 gold pieces entertaining 400,000 monks, and even more for his Ashokarama monastic centre. However, decades of philanthropic spending had virtually bankrupted the empire, and the king's ministers leaned on the young Samprati – who told the treasury to reject Ashoka's request. Denied his dying wish to donate all his remaining worldly goods to the Buddhist community, Ashoka slipped away from rulership, allowing Samprati to act in his name – before dying in 233 BCE.

The king's death was followed by another troubled succession, with a line of short-reigning kings ushering in the dynasty's demise, and the return of Brahmanism half a century later. Though Buddhism eventually faded from the subcontinent, it informed the future Hindu faith, with Buddha serving as one of Vishnu's avatars. It would also find fertile ground in Nepal, Tibet, China and beyond. Of the two symbols that adorned Ashoka's Pillar Edicts, the Bodhi tree and the Wheel of the Moral Law, the latter has been immortalised on the modern Indian flag.

It is a fitting tribute to a man, who not only presided over the largest-ever Indian empire for three decades, but transformed a minor sect into a major world religion, successfully demonstrating an entirely new model of leadership – one based not on conquest, but universal welfare.

Images Alamy, Getty Images

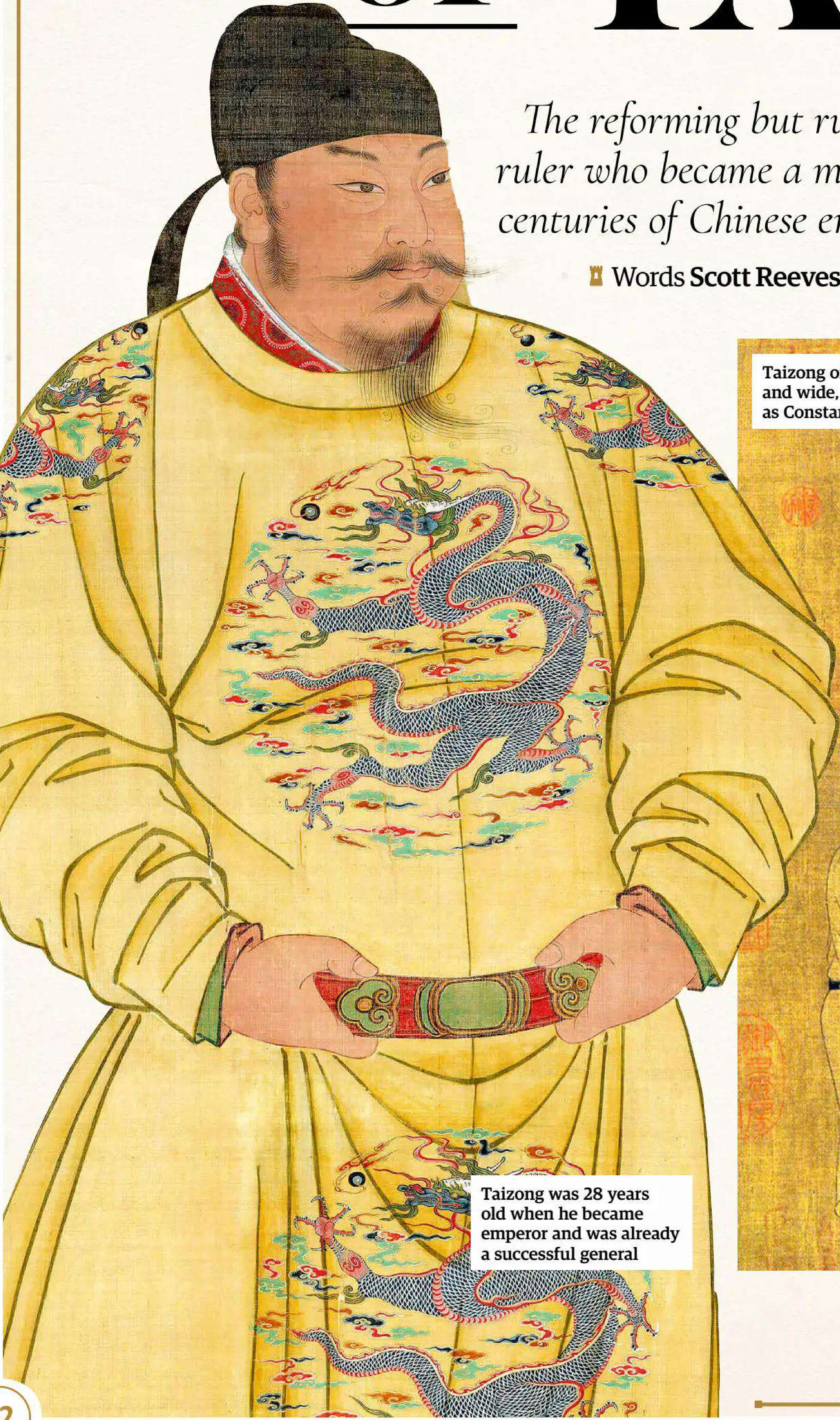
China, 626-49

TAIZONG OF TANG

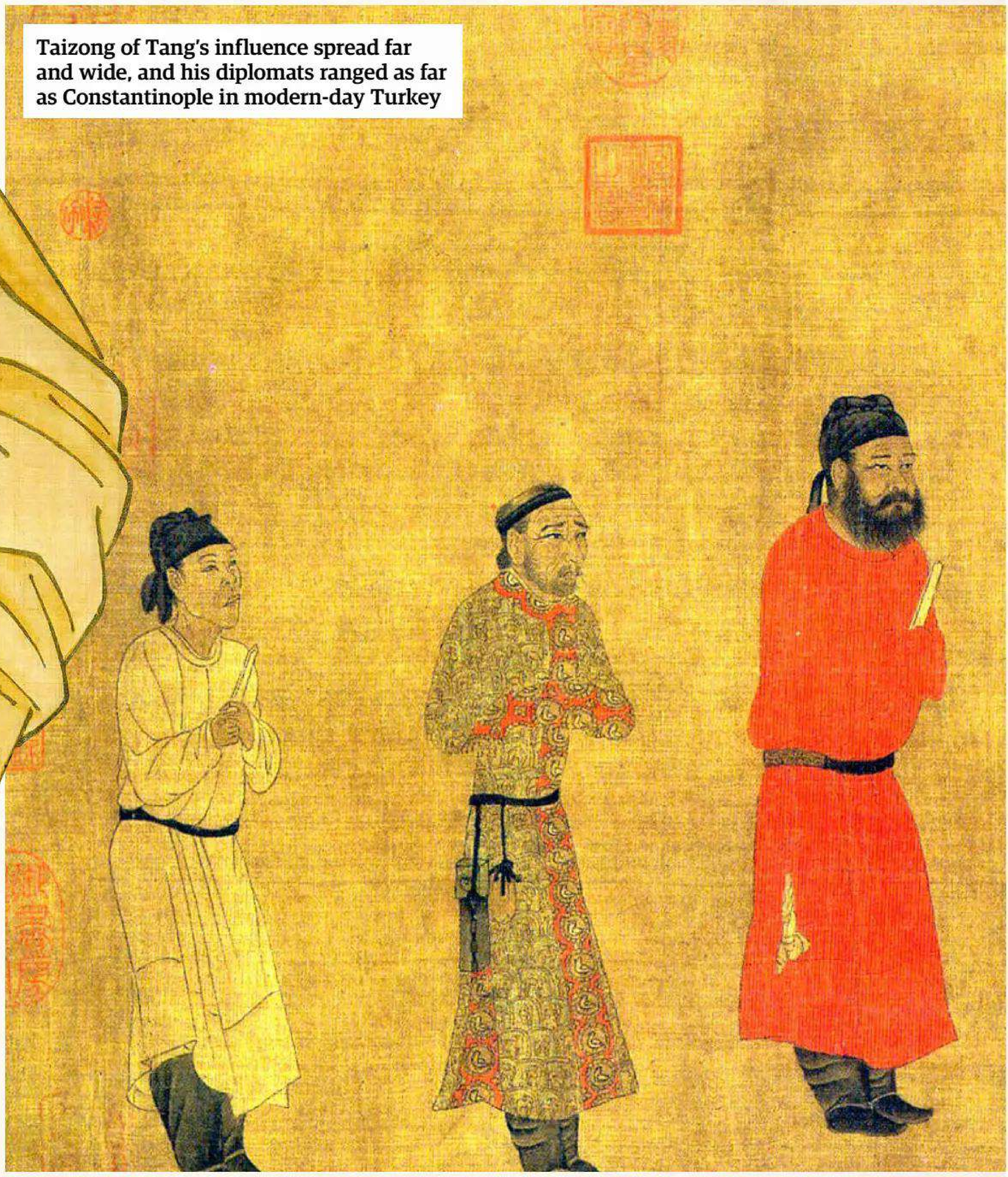
The reforming but ruthless ruler who became a model for centuries of Chinese emperors

Words **Scott Reeves**

Li Shimin rose to become Emperor Taizong after deposing his own father, who was himself a usurper. But despite his shaky claim to the Dragon Throne, Taizong was ruthless in his quest for power. He'd already proven himself an excellent battlefield commander when he helped his father's coup d'état to



Taizong was 28 years old when he became emperor and was already a successful general



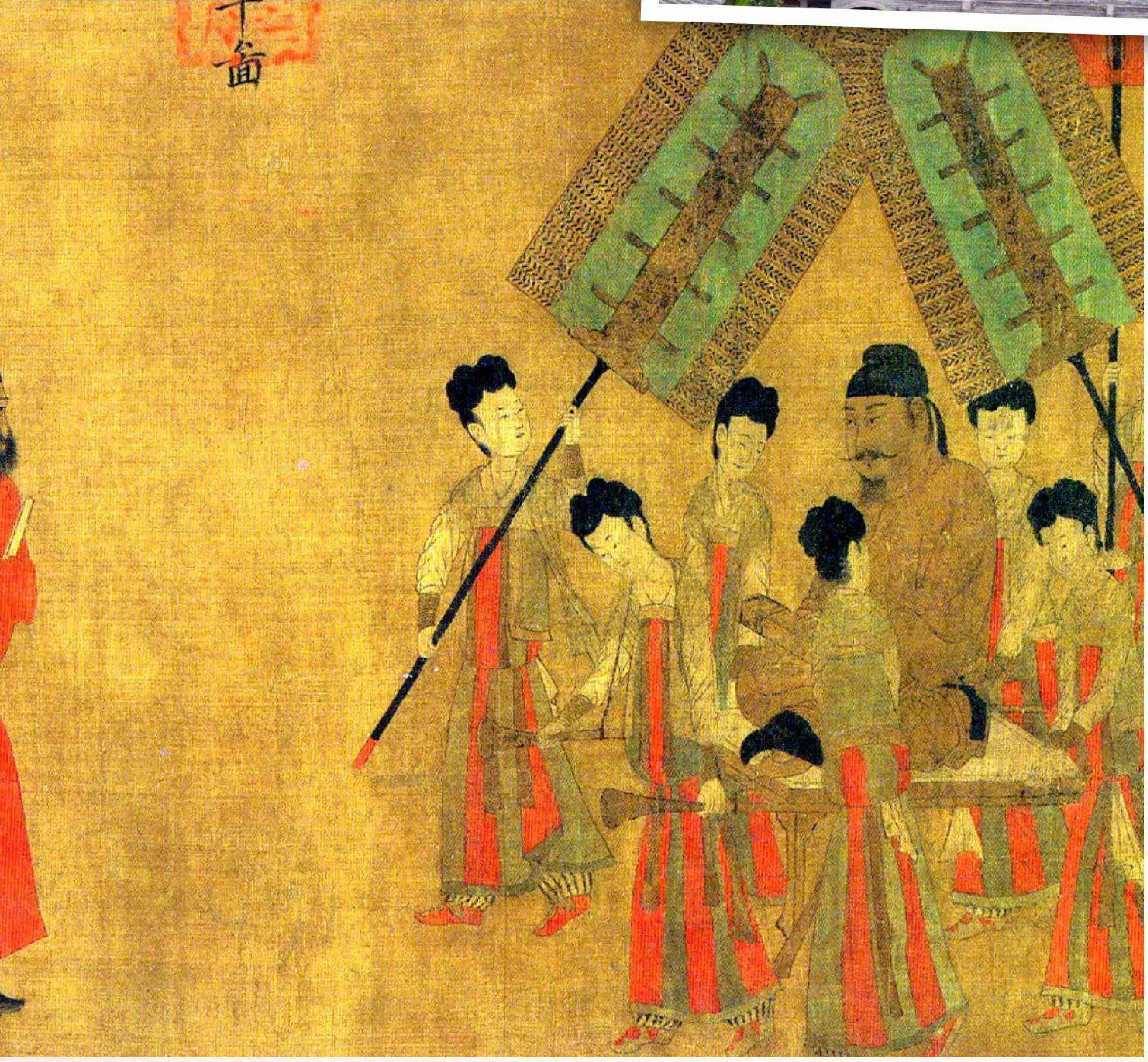
Taizong of Tang's influence spread far and wide, and his diplomats ranged as far as Constantinople in modern-day Turkey succeed. After that, he manoeuvred himself into position as heir in a simple but cold-blooded way – he ambushed and killed his older brothers. Once in charge, Taizong had his brothers' sons killed as well, to ensure they didn't become a focus of opposition to his new regime.

Taizong's armies expanded Chinese control into Mongolia, significantly increasing his landholdings, but it was at home that the emperor had the greatest impact. He reformed the Chinese civil service, developing a meritocratic system of imperial examinations to select the best people for the job. It ensured that bureaucrats did what was best for the country, not the individual who gave them their job. Taizong established four departments of government that reported directly to him, preventing any one individual from gathering enough power to challenge his position.

But Taizong was also a wise ruler. He was willing to listen to advice and allowed ministers to talk him into changing policy where appropriate. With corruption on the decline, a more effective government, and plentiful resources thanks to conquests in the north-west, China underwent an economic resurgence.

Unlike the previous four emperors, Taizong's reign ended with his natural death and the smooth succession of his ninth son and chosen heir, Li Zhi. That alone was a sign of how far Taizong had stabilised China. Thanks to his ability to combine military conquest with domestic stability and cultural achievements, Taizong was soon regarded as a model ruler. Crown princes studied Taizong's reign for centuries to come, hoping to learn the lessons required to control the often fractious and conspiratorial elites in the Chinese court.

An ancient tree in a monastery outside Xi'an was supposedly planted by Taizong's own hands



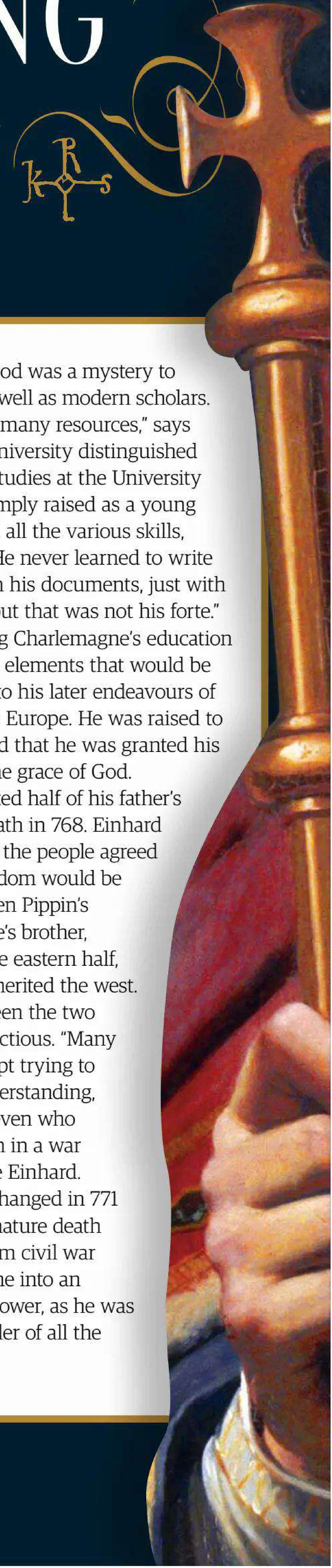
One of Taizong's concubines, Wu Zetian, would eventually rule China as empress in her own right

CHARLEMAGNE

A NEW KIND OF KING

Who was the Frankish ruler who conquered most of Europe and became the emperor of Rome?

Words **Emily Staniforth**



Charlemagne, sometimes referred to as Charles the Great, was a mighty ruler who, by the end of his life, reigned over the vast Carolingian Empire that spanned across Europe. He became king of the Franks in 768 and set off on his quest to expand his domain, conquering much of Europe during his 46-year reign. During his life, he laid the foundations for an empire that would last for nearly a millennium and established a new kind of rulership that would inspire a new generation of European kings, reshaping monarchical rule across the continent.

In the centuries before Charlemagne was born, the Roman Empire dominated the political and geographical landscape of Western Europe. However, in the 4th century, Roman influence in Europe drastically diminished as the Germanic-speaking peoples repeatedly fought against Rome's control. One of these groups, the Franks, many of whom had settled in Gaul (modern-day France and parts of Belgium, western Germany and northern Italy) after various uprisings against the Romans had been defeated, consolidated their authority under the rule of a series of kings. The Merovingian dynasty invaded neighbouring territories, defeating tribes to the south such as the Burgundians and Visigoths, to expand their growing kingdom.

However, by the end of the 7th century, the Merovingian kings held little power and authority over their lands. The Frankish territories were very rarely united under a single ruler and bitter internal fighting between the various kings had created a landscape of instability and dissension. Instead, authority was held by the mayors of the palace, who fulfilled a role similar to that of a prime minister. Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne, held this office and began to dominate both the eastern and western sides of the vast kingdom, beginning the gradual takeover by the Carolingian dynasty.

Charlemagne's father, Pippin, finally deposed the Merovingian dynasty and made himself king in 751. Pippin claimed to have gained papal approval for the deposition of the Merovingians, although there are only Frankish sources that record this (as described by medieval historian Jennifer R Davis in *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire*). In 753, however, both Frankish and papal sources record that the pope travelled to Francia for the first time and an alliance was formed. The pope declared the Frankish kings should only be chosen from the Carolingian line from that point onwards, and in return, the Franks would support the papal states against pressure from the Lombards in Italy.

CHARLEMAGNE'S EARLY LIFE

Charlemagne was born to Pippin and Bertrada of Laon in around 749, although the exact birth date is unknown. We can only guess what his early life was like. The Frankish scholar, Einhard, Charlemagne's contemporary who served in his court, wrote in his biography of the great king: "It would be folly, I think, to write a word concerning Charles' birth and infancy, or even his boyhood, for nothing has ever been written on the subject, and there is no one alive now who can give information on it". Einhard wrote this biography, the *Vita Karoli Magni* (*The Life of Charlemagne*), after the emperor's death in 814, though historians cannot agree on a specific date. Nevertheless, it's clear that Charlemagne's childhood was a mystery to his contemporaries as well as modern scholars.

"We don't have that many resources," says Dr Albrecht Classen, university distinguished professor of German Studies at the University of Arizona. "He was simply raised as a young nobleman and learned all the various skills, military and athletic. He never learned to write so he could barely sign his documents, just with clumsy handwriting, but that was not his forte." It is believed the young Charlemagne's education incorporated Christian elements that would be particularly pertinent to his later endeavours of religious reform across Europe. He was raised to serve God and believed that he was granted his secular authority by the grace of God.

Charlemagne inherited half of his father's dominion upon his death in 768. Einhard wrote that a council of the people agreed that the Frankish kingdom would be divided equally between Pippin's two sons. Charlemagne's brother, Carloman, inherited the eastern half, while Charlemagne inherited the west. The relationship between the two Frankish kings was fractious. "Many of Carloman's party kept trying to disturb their good understanding, and there were some even who plotted to involve them in a war with each other," wrote Einhard. However, everything changed in 771 when Carloman's premature death saved the kingdom from civil war and thrust Charlemagne into an increased position of power, as he was proclaimed the sole ruler of all the Frankish territories.

Images Alamy, Albrecht Classen, Marios Costambeys

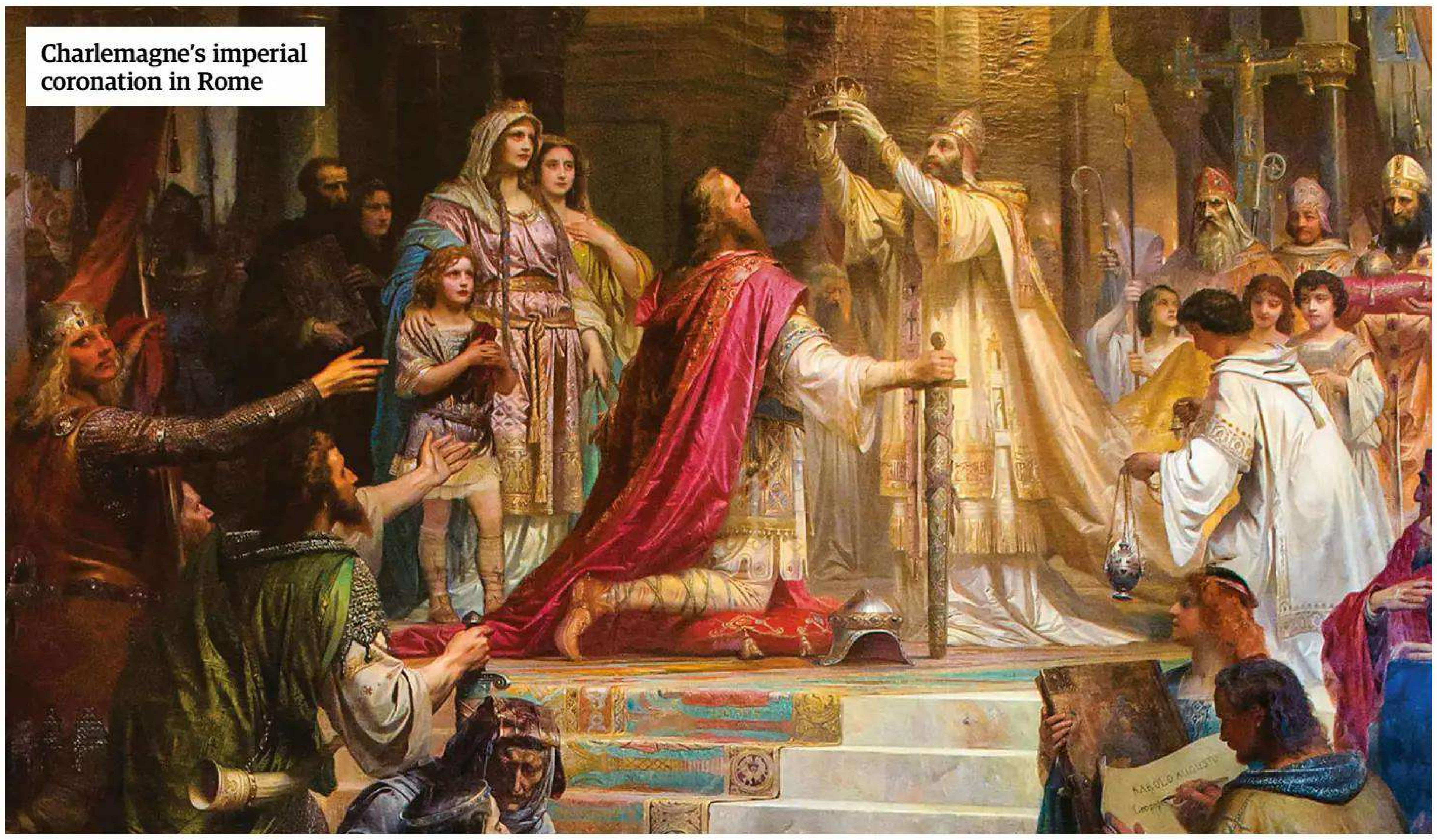
EXPERT BIO

ALBRECHT CLASSEN

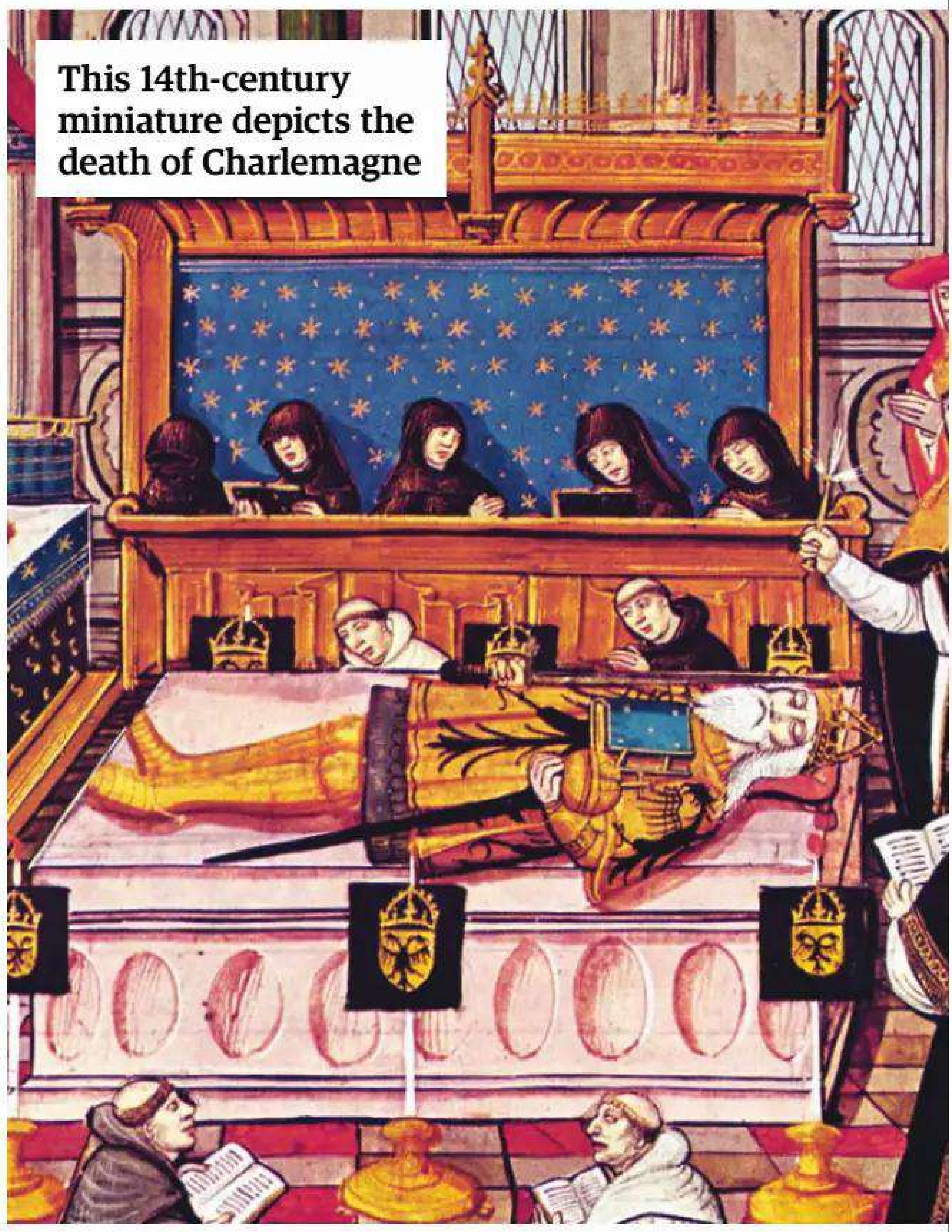
Albrecht Classen is a university distinguished professor in the Department of German Studies at the University of Arizona. He is the author of *Charlemagne in Medieval German and Dutch Literature* (Boydell & Brewer, 2021).

MARIOS COSTAMBEYS

Marios Costambeys is a medieval historian at the University of Liverpool. He is the co-author of *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) and has also written about Charlemagne, Alcuin and the imperial coronation.



Charlemagne's imperial coronation in Rome



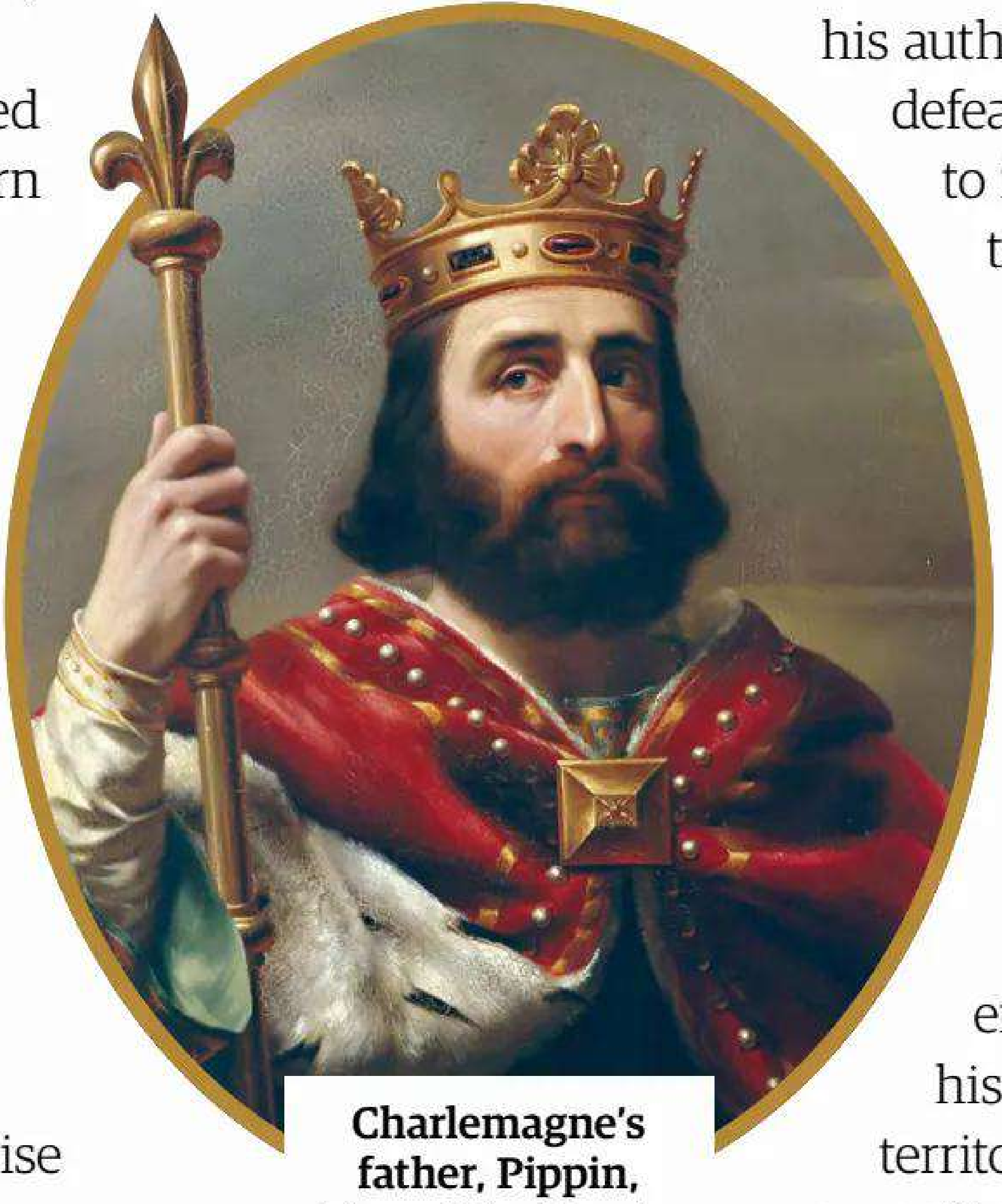
This 14th-century miniature depicts the death of Charlemagne

EXPANDING THE FRANKISH KINGDOM

After his accession as the sole king of the Franks, Charlemagne set out to secure his lands against neighbouring forces who kept attempting to seize Frankish territory. This campaign began with a bloody war against the Saxons. In 772, Charlemagne's forces marched into Saxony (modern northern Germany) for the first time. A series of expeditions resulted in a permanent military presence in a fortified borderland, known as a 'march', in Western Saxony.

Charlemagne's military mission also gave him a chance to spread Christianity to a traditionally pagan area of Europe. There had been several attempts to Christianise Saxony before his rule, but it was Charlemagne and his forces who succeeded in spreading Christianity. Charlemagne's Christianisation of the Saxons was a personal success for the emperor. He had neutralised the threat they posed to his territories and converted them to the Christian faith. During the decades-long war in Saxony, Charlemagne's military expansion continued across other areas of Europe. In 774, his conquest of the Lombards in north Italy resulted in him being crowned king there. In 778, he conquered Bavaria, absorbing it into his expanding domain.

The Avars, a society who had settled in Eastern Europe on the River Danube and are sometimes referred to as the successors of the Huns, provoked Charlemagne with their raids into Bavaria after it had been swallowed by his growing territories. He subsequently launched a war with the Avars to secure his newly acquired lands in Italy and Germany, with which the Avars shared a border, and to consolidate his authority. The Saxons and other defeated tribes also sent troops to fight, effectively bringing together Charlemagne's people under one cause. His campaign against the Avars was a successful one and they were absorbed into his vast empire in around 796.



Charlemagne's father, Pippin, king of the Franks

Charlemagne's sophisticated administrative organisation not only enabled him to maintain his authority over his huge territory, but also to crush opposition in the various states across Europe. "This was a face-to-face society so he spent an awful lot of time in the saddle," explains Dr Marios Costambeys, a medieval historian from the University of Liverpool. "For the first two decades of his reign he was moving around because face-to-face contact was important and the aristocrats would certainly come to him, but he also made sure they knew that he might turn up. In practice, this involved a massive logistical exercise because the royal court travelled around mostly Northern Europe like a plague of locusts. It would establish itself in one place, eat that place dry and then move on."

Charlemagne knew of the church's critical role in consolidating his power over his growing empire. He used the structures within the church to administrate and maintain control across his lands. "He was fully aware that the church could help him because the bishops or priests or deacons were not necessarily interested in secular power but they were educated and they were supported by Charlemagne, who had first-rate administrators all over his country," says Classen.

Charlemagne also utilised violence to assert his power over his subjects. In his war with Saxony, he committed atrocities against those he was trying to conquer, most notably at the Massacre of Verden in 782, where he apparently ordered the killing of around 4,500 Saxons. Einhard makes no mention of the massacre in his biography, but does allude to Charlemagne's brutality. However, Charlemagne largely allowed those he conquered to function as they had done previously. He intervened if his new subjects revolted, but if they remained peaceful they were left alone.

EMPEROR OF THE ROMANS

Charlemagne's relationship with the church blossomed as his reign continued. Using Christianity as a unifying tool across his domain made him popular with the papacy and in turn, the pope supported him in his territorial expansion. Hadrian I, who was the pope for the majority of Charlemagne's reign, had a positive relationship with the king. Charlemagne established monasteries and cathedrals throughout his territories and offered protection to the pope in return for the latter's continued patronage. This patronage culminated in Charlemagne being proclaimed emperor of the Romans, the first since the fall of the Roman

CHARLEMAGNE'S CAPITAL

The mighty king established his seat of power in Aachen

Charlemagne's preferred royal residence, the city of Aachen underwent a transformation during the Carolingian period. Originally called Aquisgranum by the Romans and used as a spa town, Aachen now sits in western Germany and borders Belgium and the Netherlands. Under Charlemagne's rule, Aachen became a centre for learning and culture. Here, a magnificent imperial palace was built, which was the central base from which Charlemagne ruled over his vast empire. A masterpiece of Carolingian architecture, the palace complex consisted of many different buildings. It was at this palace that a school was established, of which Charlemagne's friend and advisor, Alcuin of York, was at the head.

Today, much of the imperial palace no longer exists, though Charlemagne's impressive Palatine Chapel has been preserved as part of Aachen's Cathedral. Inside the chapel, the decor remains largely unchanged from the time of Charlemagne and is a model of Carolingian architecture. The stone throne, known as the Throne of Charlemagne and which still sits at the heart of the chapel, was used as the coronation seat for Holy Roman Emperors from the Middle Ages through to the 16th century.

Empire. The coronation was said to be the result of Charlemagne's intervention to save Pope Leo III, with whom he had a less close relationship than with Hadrian, when Leo was attacked by hostile factions in Rome. In 799, the pope fled to Charlemagne's court after his enemies tried to blind him in the street and Charlemagne arranged for the pope to safely return to Rome. He set about fixing the problem and in 800 Charlemagne travelled to Rome and organised for Pope Leo to publicly swear an oath to eradicate the charges of misconduct against him.

"There was a lot of conflict between the pope and the local dynasties. [Charlemagne] kind of cut through all of this, in a way brilliantly, as the outsider and not caring about the local squabbles. Instead, he moved ahead and set up his superior power," explains Classen.

On Christmas Day 800, Pope Leo thanked Charlemagne by anointing him as emperor in a ceremony, the exact nature of which is unclear. Contemporary accounts of the occasion are contradictory, and the root of Charlemagne's coronation being his intervention in the pope's disputes has also been questioned. Given the relationship between Charlemagne and the papacy, it is possible that he had long-standing ambitions to become emperor. "Almost nobody believes what his biographer says, which is that when he goes to Rome and is crowned this is a complete surprise to him and that he didn't expect it. There are lots of signs that, in fact, this was all being set up for a couple of years beforehand. So the idea of some kind of imperial ceremony is already in place before Leo's more immediate difficulties," says Costambeys.

The title Charlemagne was given in this ceremony was not that of 'Holy Roman Emperor', though that is the title that has been remembered. The title of emperor granted firstly to Charlemagne would evolve over the centuries into that of leader of the Holy Roman Empire, which did not exist during Charlemagne's time. Despite this, the title was still a significant moment for Charlemagne as he was the first non-Italian, non-Roman emperor in Europe, appointed by the pope and thus God, which helped to consolidate his authority throughout his empire.

> *"He prioritised education and set up schools across Europe for his subjects"*

THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE

The Carolingian Renaissance is one of the triumphs of Charlemagne's reign. He prioritised education and set up schools across Europe for his subjects, especially those in the church who became politically useful serving in his Christian administrative network. "He called in the first major school master, Alcuin of York," says Classen. "Alcuin of York basically set up a school and once that school had graduated some students they became abbots. They set up their own monasteries and each monastery had its own school. Out of those schools came new abbots for other churches. So it spread all over the country."

Inspired partly by the culture of the Roman Empire in the 4th century, art, architecture and literature flourished throughout the Carolingian Empire, despite the emperor being illiterate. "He promoted the arts, architecture and sculpture. It all served his own fame. He promoted schools and the spread of learning, but he himself did not acquire those basic skills," says Classen. This renaissance, or "correctio" as the Carolingians referred to it, also helped Charlemagne promote Christian learning in a religious and cultural capacity. His investment in monastic schools and producing documents allowed for wider access to biblical and liturgical knowledge.

CHARLEMAGNE'S LEGACY

Charlemagne died in 814 and left his throne to his son, Louis the Pious, who'd been acting as co-emperor as his father's health declined in his final years. Charlemagne had created an empire that was the envy of the medieval world and had united most of Europe under his rule. After his death, he became a touchstone for European kingship, inspiring future leaders like Napoleon Bonaparte, who saw Charlemagne's reign as an ideal example of imperialism. He was elevated to a legendary status and mythologised as the perfect example of kingship, much like the mythical King Arthur in England.

"He very quickly becomes a model. He's the reference point for rulership in Europe, certainly Latin Christian Europe, for over 1,000 years after. He was constantly being referenced by later medieval kings and emperors, but also those in the early modern and modern periods, up to and including dictators of the mid-20th century," says Costambeys. The Holy Roman Empire, which evolved from Charlemagne's establishment of the Carolingian Empire, continued under a succession of emperors until 1806, almost 1,000 years after Charlemagne's death.

Images Alamy

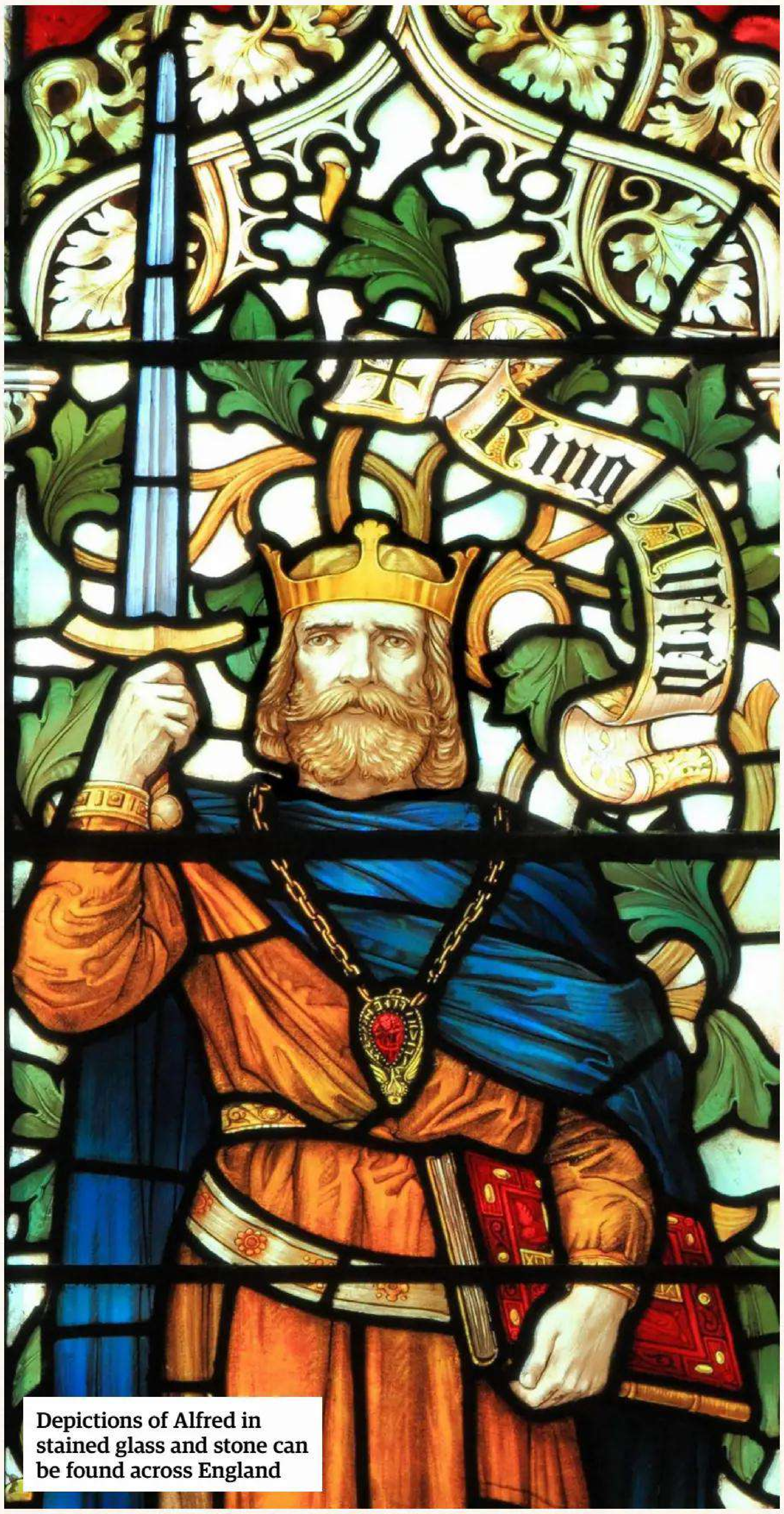
Anglo-Saxons, 871-99

ALFRED THE GREAT

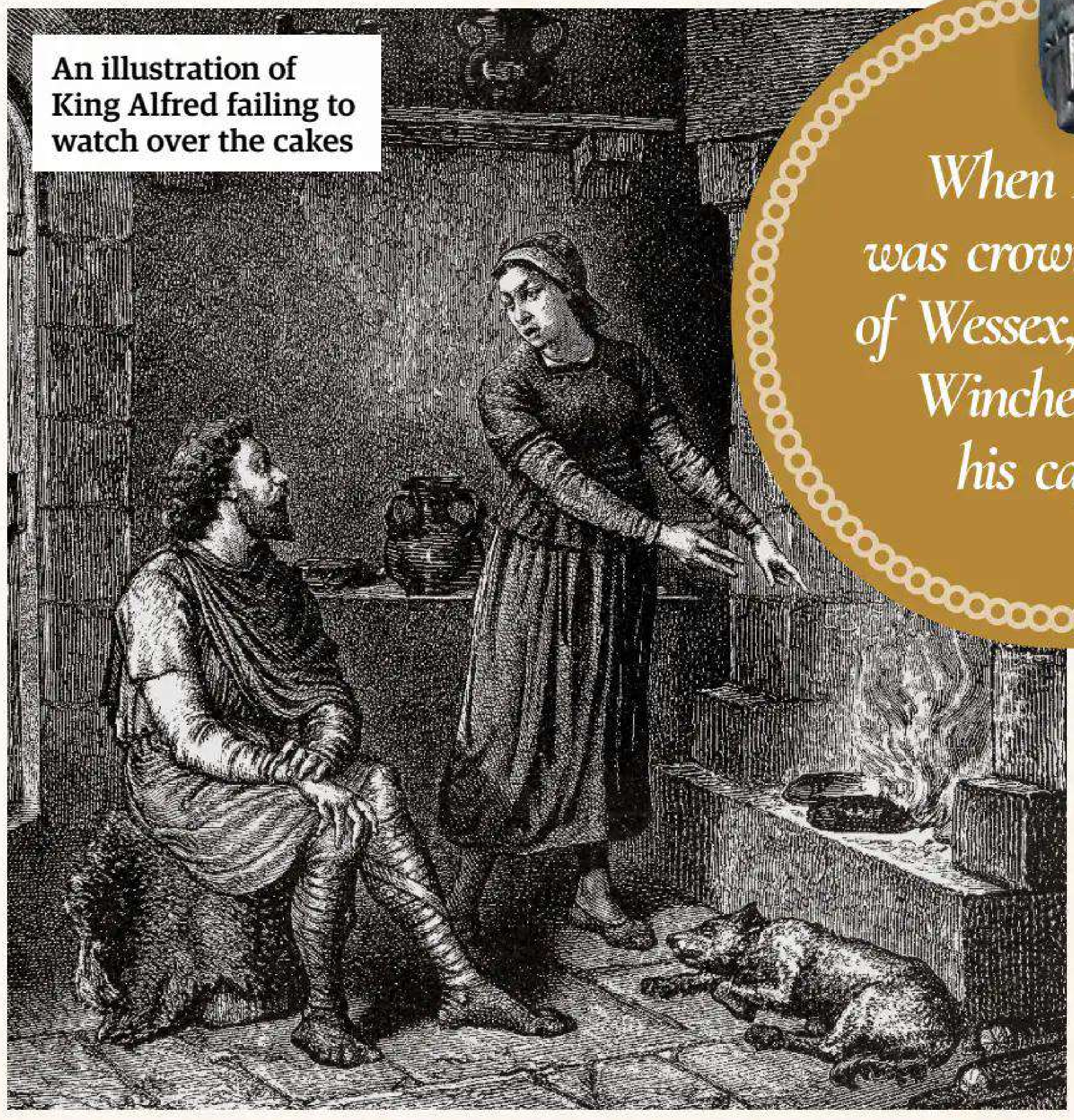
There's more to this Anglo-Saxon king than a few burned cakes

Words **Scott Reeves**

Although he is the only English ruler to be given the epithet 'the Great', there was initially no sign that Alfred would go down in history as one of Britain's best monarchs. He inherited the kingdom of Wessex from his older brother just as the Vikings were bearing down on it after conquering the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Alfred paid off the Vikings to buy time, but it was only a temporary solution. Seven years later, an army under Guthrum, the Danish King of East Anglia, attacked Chippenham when Alfred was in residence, and the last Anglo-Saxon king left standing fled into the marshes of

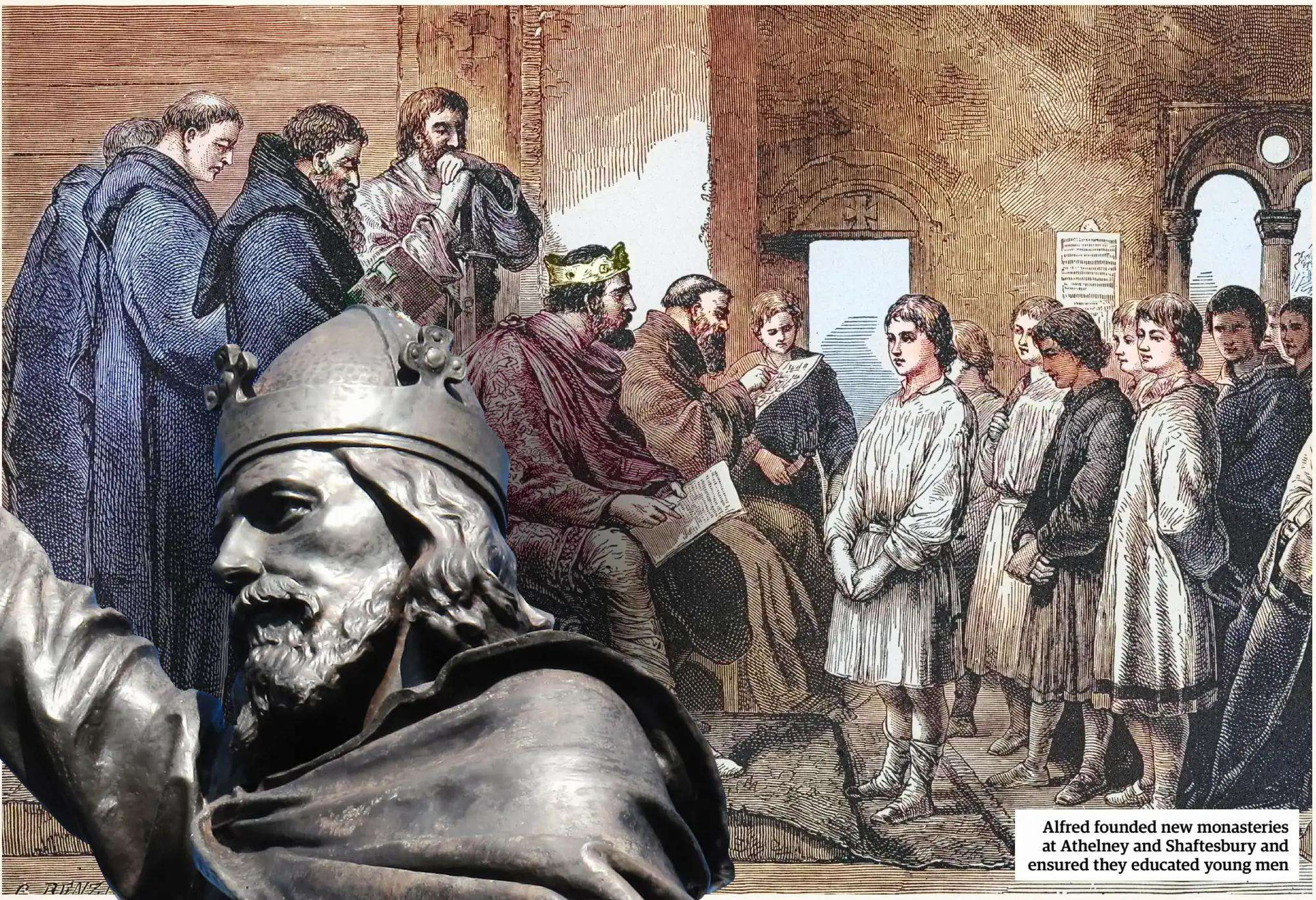


Depictions of Alfred in stained glass and stone can be found across England



An illustration of King Alfred failing to watch over the cakes

When Alfred was crowned King of Wessex, he chose Winchester as his capital



Alfred founded new monasteries at Athelney and Shaftesbury and ensured they educated young men

the Somerset Levels. Here, the legend was born that Alfred absent-mindedly burned the wheaten cakes of a peasant woman who was sheltering the disguised king.

Sadly, the story of the burned cakes is probably only propaganda – but there's no doubting the veracity of Alfred's remarkable comeback from the brink of defeat. After hiding out in the wetlands, Alfred raised an army and defeated Guthrum's army at the Battle of Edington. The invaders agreed to leave Wessex alone, and that gave Alfred time and space to rebuild. He took control of part of the old kingdom of Mercia, including the growing city of London, and stylised himself as the King of Anglo-Saxons.

Although Alfred never ruled over all of England, he made it an ambition that his descendants would eventually achieve. Alfred also laid the groundwork for the ultimate victory. He fortified existing settlements and built new ones to act as defendable bases in case of future attacks. He created a system of taxation to pay for national defence, and to construct a small fleet of warships that could compete with Viking longships on the water. Alfred also organised the many, messy law codes that had contradicted each other for generations, consolidating them into one single book of laws, and encouraged his subjects to learn to read and write – something he himself was only taught to do at 12 years old.

Alfred's victory from defeat is a fantastic story, but his work on law, defence and literacy is more enduring

Anglo-Saxons, 1016–1035

CNUT

EMPEROR OF THE NORTH

A thousand years ago, a young Viking warrior became King of England. No one at the time could have expected how remarkable his reign would be

Words **Wayne Bartlett**

The life of Cnut was extraordinary. A strong, reliable supporter of the church, he was an archetypal Viking raider and he formed a dynamic marital alliance with his wife, Emma. He ruled England and Denmark and, for a short time, was king of Norway. His government of what has been called an 'Empire of the North' was a unique achievement, setting Cnut apart as a remarkable ruler.

Cnut's roots were in Denmark. His great-grandfather, Gorm the Old, was the founder-figure of the Jelling dynasty in Jutland. Gorm was a formidable pagan warrior, but his son, Harald Bluetooth, became an enthusiastic Christian ruler. Harald was involved in a bitter civil war with his son, Sweyn Forkbeard, which ended with him fleeing the country and dying shortly afterwards in exile. Sweyn took over and won a reputation as a ferocious Viking raider, launching attacks on Britain, Ireland and elsewhere.

Cnut, Sweyn's son, was likely born around 995. We don't know about the first 18 years of Cnut's life, and he was first mentioned in 1013 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. That year, he accompanied Sweyn on what was supposed to be the climactic campaign to conquer England. After several decades of raiding, increasing in scale and often only ended by the payment of what became known as 'Danegeld', Sweyn sensed that England was fatally wounded and moved in for the kill.

He found support from the region of the Danelaw (around the East Midlands of modern England), and Northumbria also submitted to him. Moving into southern England, the defence against his forces collapsed. The English king, Æthelred II ('the Unready') fled the country with his wife Emma and their children, Edward and Alfred. England, it seemed, had fallen. King Æthelred would later be painted as incompetent and cowardly in equal measure. It was a harsh assessment given the enormous challenges that he had faced, but his reign had apparently ended in spectacular failure.

> "Cnut's intention was to pay off Viking raiders he had no use for… to govern as he wanted to"

Yet, Sweyn died before he had been made king. Cnut was not with him, having stayed in the Danelaw while Sweyn had moved into southern England. Shortly after, Cnut was badly caught out by a surprise attack on his camp launched by English forces. Æthelred returned from exile and Cnut, barely escaping with his life, fled to Denmark.

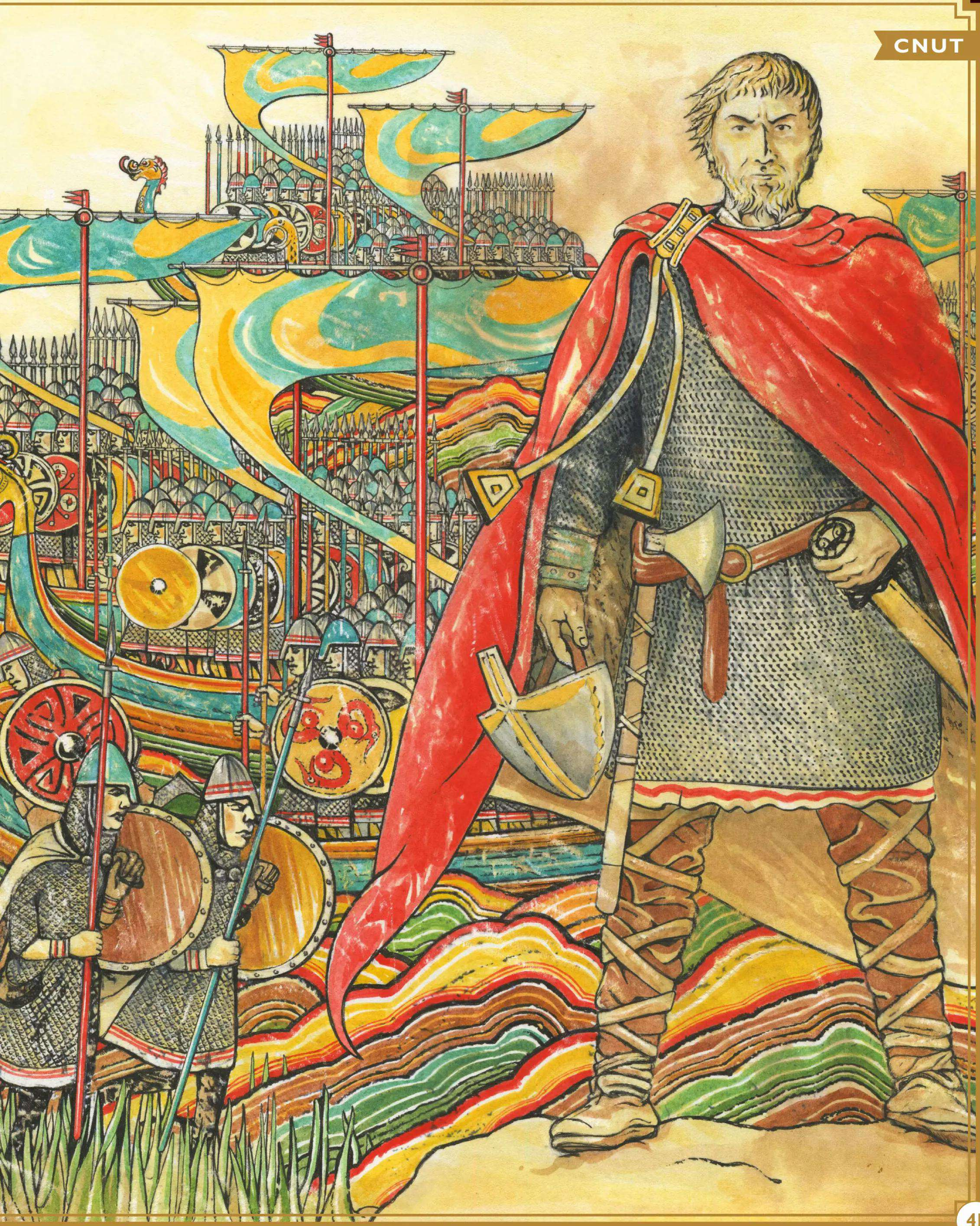
England's respite, though, was short-lived. In 1015, Cnut was back with 200 ships sailing through the 'mouth of the Frome' into Dorset. A brutal war began for the control of England between Cnut and Edmund Ironside, the son of the now-dying King Æthelred and his first wife. Both were young warriors, in their early 20s, and several battles took place at Penselwood, Sherston and Otford, with Cnut also laying siege to London.

The last decisive battle took place at Ashingdon (or Assandun), Essex, in October 1016. It ended in a crushing victory for Cnut. Edmund survived the battle and a deal was struck that left him with Wessex but Cnut with the rest of England. The deal did not survive for long because on 30 November 1016, Edmund very conveniently died, leaving Cnut as the undisputed king of all England.

At the time, it was likely that the English people were filled with trepidation at these developments. Given the ruthless nature of Viking raids on the country, there was a chance that the new king would milk England for all it was worth, and early signs did little to dispel that impression. Within a year, Cnut removed those who he felt were plotting against him including Eadric Streona, Earl of Mercia, who had betrayed the old regime.

In 1018, he raised the highest Danegeld payment yet; £10,500 from London and £72,000 from the rest of England. But there was a subtext to this move: Cnut's intention was to use the money to pay off Viking raiders he had no use for now, allowing him to govern as he wanted to.

The first sign that Cnut was more than just a Viking raider occurred at around the same time.



At a Parliament at Oxford, he adopted the laws of the late King Edgar, whose reign was perceived as an age of peace and prosperity. It followed his marriage to Emma, Æthelred's widow. Emma had two children from her first marriage; Edward (King Edward the Confessor) and Alfred. Cnut also had two children from his relationship with Ælfgifu of Northampton, named Sweyn and Harold (later Harold Harefoot, King of England). After her marriage to Cnut, Emma gave birth to another son, Harthacnut.

The death of Cnut's childless elder brother, Harald, left Denmark open and Cnut installed himself as king there. He also strengthened his hold on England by appointing strong supporters in positions of authority. Most prominent among these was Earl Godwin, whom Cnut appointed as his representative in the crucial sub-kingdom of Wessex. Godwin would marry the sister of Cnut's brother-in-law. They had many children, including Harold, who would become king of England and die at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Norway had once been part of Sweyn Forkbeard's empire until a rebellion there threw off Danish rule. His successor was Olaf Haraldsson, who now allied himself with the king of Sweden and raised an army to attack Denmark. Cnut got together an army of his own to face up to the threat. The two forces clashed in southern Sweden at the Battle of Helgeå. It was an indecisive confrontation, but Cnut succeeded in hanging on to Denmark.

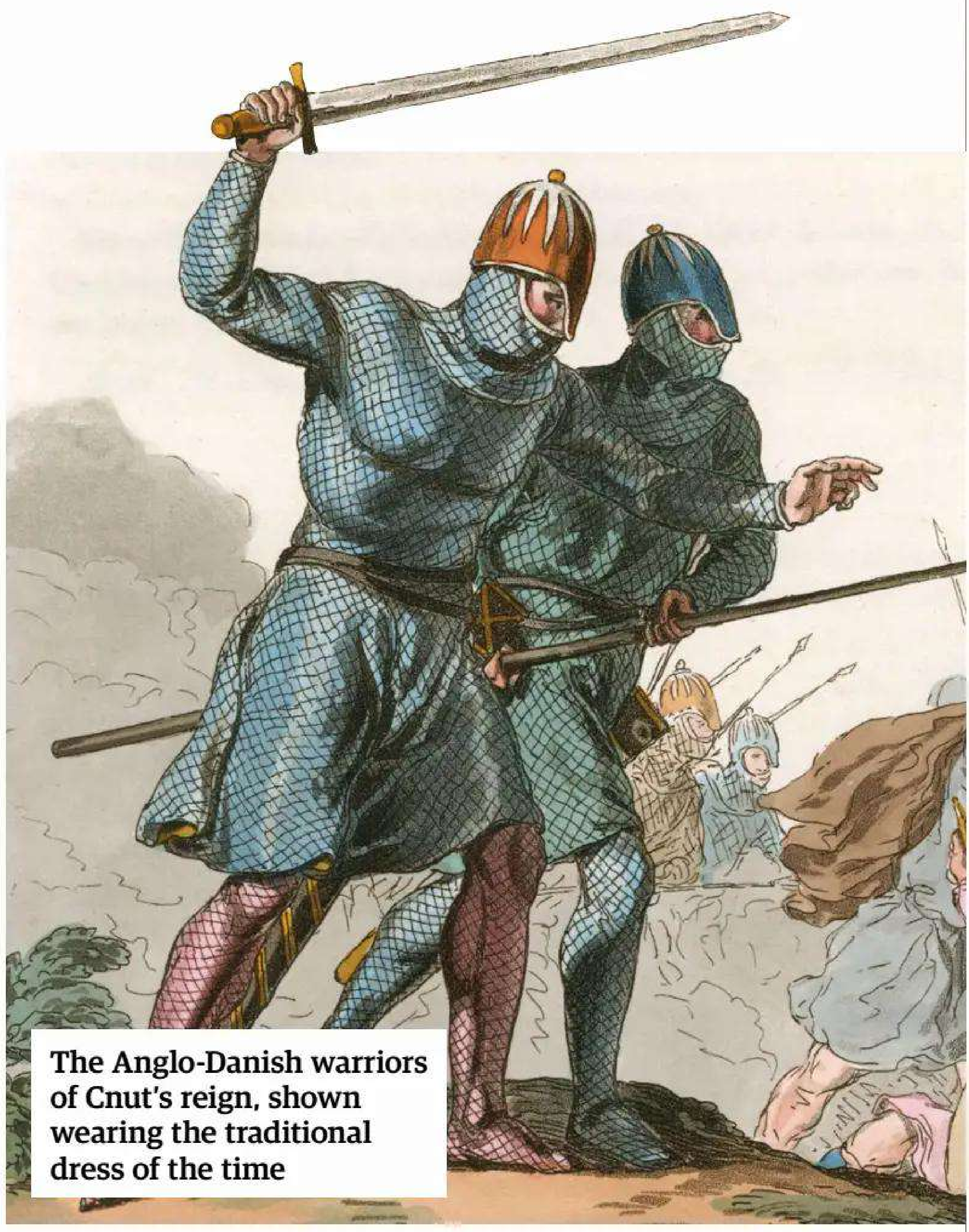
Shortly after, his brother-in-law, Ulf, was killed in Roskilde Cathedral. Cnut then journeyed to Rome for the coronation of the Holy Roman Emperor, Conrad II. To attend this ceremony was a great mark of recognition for a man who was effectively a Viking king, making a great impression domestically and abroad.

A significant part of Cnut's reign was the close relationships he built with the church. He was a generous patron of various religious establishments in both England and Denmark. He also appointed allies into key positions of influence in the church, such as when Æthelnoth was made archbishop of Canterbury in 1020. This helped to build not only his influence but also his reputation, and further strengthen his position.

However, Norway was unfinished for Cnut. Following his return from the indecisive battle at Helgeå, King Olaf's position had become increasingly fragile back in Norway, a very fragmented country with numerous regions, especially those positioned in the wild north that were virtually ungovernable. Cnut used England's wealth to make gifts to disaffected nobles in Norway. When he arrived with a massive army, Olaf's position quickly collapsed.

Olaf fled the country but he returned soon after in a vain attempt to reclaim it. At his side was his half-brother Harald, who later – as Harald Hardrada ('the Ruthless') – became one of the most famous Vikings and would die at Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire in 1066. Olaf lost his life in the battle at Stiklestad. Olaf was a staunch Christian ruler and soon after his death was canonised. Saint Olaf would prove much more successful in death than King Olaf ever was in life.

But Cnut was not successful as king of Norway. He appointed his first wife, Ælfgifu, as his regent along with their son, Sweyn. However, a disastrous famine undermined their position; this was a time of great suffering across much of the continent and not just in Scandinavia. Their rule was allegedly very harsh and a number of revolts led to the collapse of Cnut's regime there. Olaf's son, Magnus, soon became king in his stead.


The Anglo-Danish warriors of Cnut's reign, shown wearing the traditional dress of the time

Norway was only a temporary part of Cnut's 'empire'. Perhaps the dispersed territories that Cnut ruled made them inherently hard to govern. Certainly the diversity of his subjects, and the relative 'newness' of all three core countries in it – England, Denmark and Norway – presented him with great challenges. It was a tough act for anyone to pull off and certainly, there were indications that some of those around him, especially the sons who would have to run his territories after his death – and to a significant extent would be expected to do so when he was alive – were not up to the task, though they were young.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

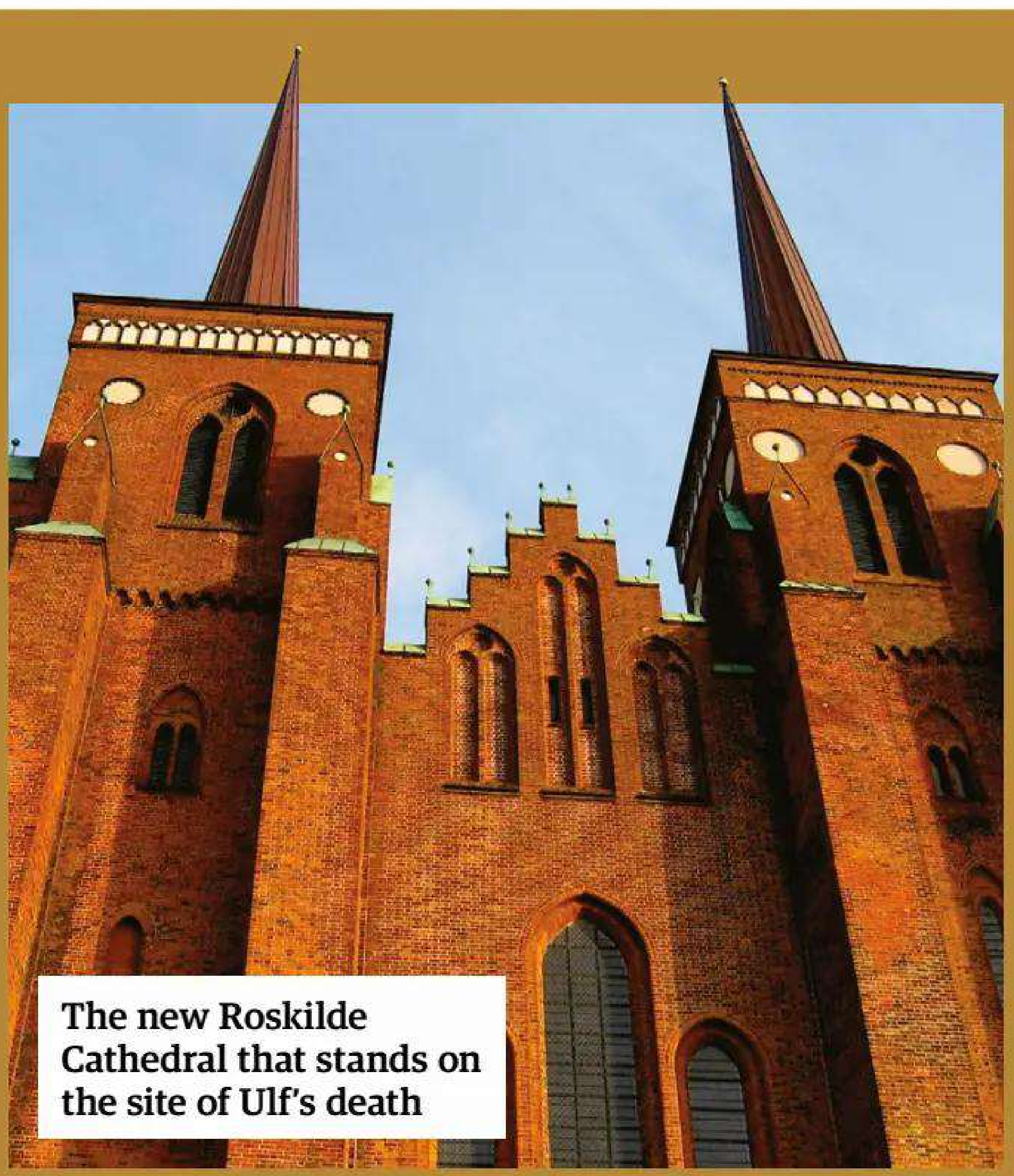
Cnut's involvement in the elimination of his brother-in-law Ulf

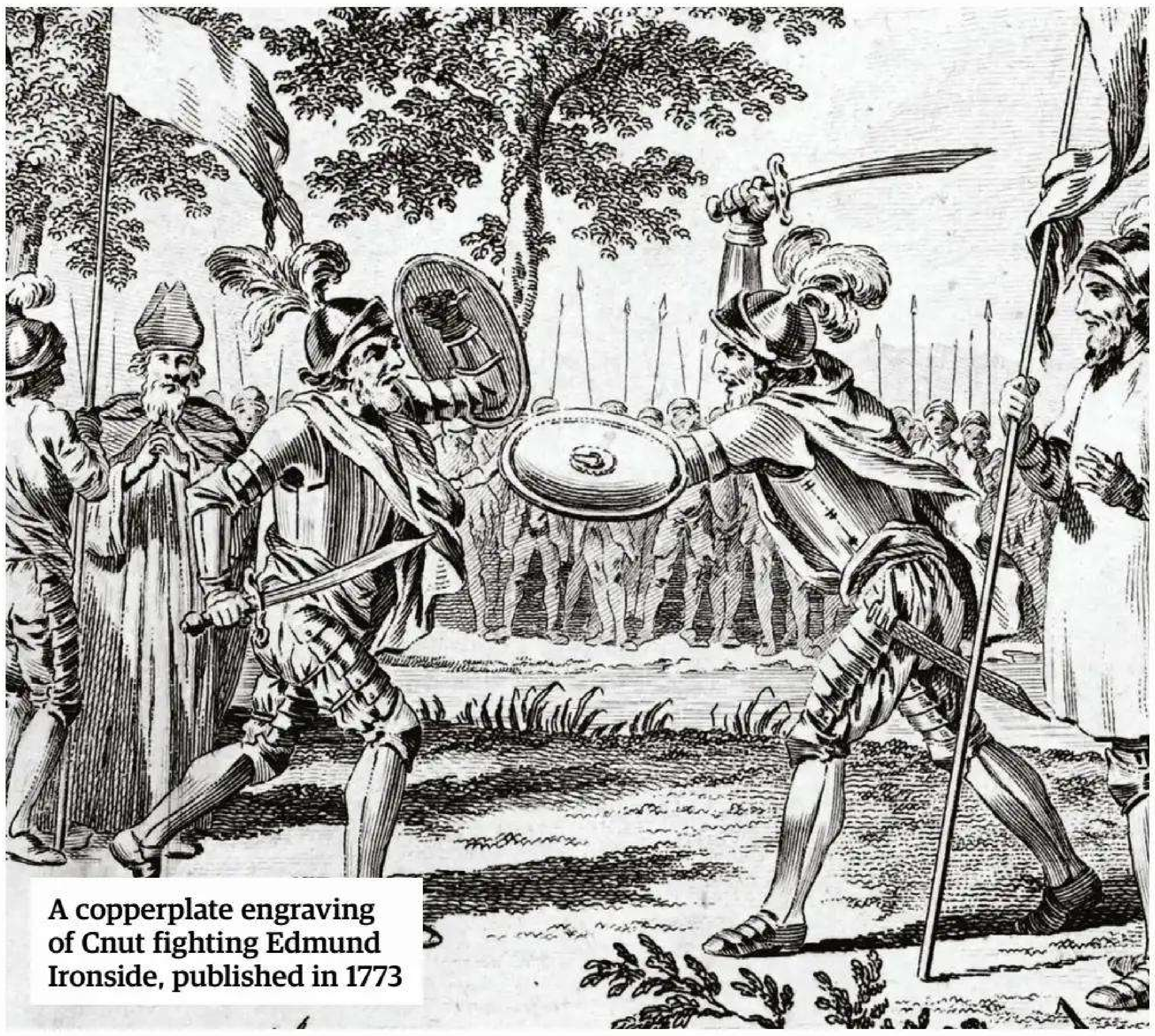
Although Cnut proved to be a strong and successful king, on several occasions he found himself at odds with his supporters – and even members of his extended family. Ulf was Cnut's brother-in-law, married to his sister Estrid. In the lead-up to the Battle of Holy River, there were suggestions that Ulf's loyalty was suspect. Cnut's young son, Harthacnut, was in Denmark as its nominal ruler and it seems that Ulf tried to dominate political affairs there in the absence of a powerful king resident in the country.

Nevertheless, Ulf appears to have been with Cnut when he took part in the battle at Helgeå. After, they returned to Denmark together to the royal capital, Roskilde. There was soon a family squabble, according to some accounts over something as trivial as a chess game. However, it may have been a breakdown in trust between the two that led to Cnut's next action.

In an angered state, Cnut sent men to kill Ulf. They found him inside Roskilde Cathedral, though other accounts say Ulf was on the royal farm. While some men hesitated to carry out orders given the sacred nature of the place, one of them, Ivar White, had no such scruples and killed Ulf.

This unchristian act must have created alarm, and the fact Cnut was able to survive this incident with his reputation relatively intact speaks highly of his political skills. Yet, his sister still sent her son Sweyn into protective exile for the remainder of Cnut's life. Cnut paid large sums of money to Estrid to allow her to build a grander structure at Roskilde, perhaps as a way of salving a guilty conscience.


The new Roskilde Cathedral that stands on the site of Ulf's death



A copperplate engraving of Cnut fighting Edmund Ironside, published in 1773

A stained glass image of Cnut from Canterbury Cathedral

> *"There was little doubt Cnut had seen the associated power from being an emperor"*

Cnut certainly had imperial pretensions. His visit to Rome made a great impact on him. He was so impressed at the grandeur of the great Imperial Crown worn by Conrad II that he had a replica made for himself. Letters back to England afterwards included several implicit imperial references – for example, when Cnut ostentatiously described himself as "King of England, Denmark, Norway [not at the time conquered] and part of Sweden". There was little doubt that Cnut had seen the magnificence and associated power that came from being an emperor that he took to modelling himself as one to a certain extent.

Yet, paradoxically, Cnut also became renowned for his humility. His great generosity to the Christian church has already been mentioned, but his actions also won respect. On a visit to the north of England late in his reign, he walked five miles barefoot to visit the tomb of the revered Saint Cuthbert in Durham. Chroniclers of the time wrote of a man who was more monk than king. Although these attributes may have been exaggerated, as was common, this suggests a man who wanted to make a strong impression for his Christian acts.

This was an approach that was perhaps based on both the political advantages of it and Cnut's personal convictions. It made him a 'modern' ruler who could sit at the high table of European politics as an equal, rather than be regarded with suspicion by his fellow rulers as a potential raider. This brought him political benefits, including his significant alliance with Conrad II. Denmark and the Holy Roman Empire shared a porous and problematic border, but the alliance brought stability, enabling Cnut to focus on his unfinished business in Norway. Conrad's son married Cnut's daughter, Gunhilda – a sign of Cnut's importance in European affairs.

Cnut appeared to retain more 'Viking' characteristics. He apparently loved the sagas, just like the more traditional Scandinavian rulers before him. He appears in them, though reflecting the changing times, the heroes were now typically Christian rather than followers of Odin or Thor. This was a sign that the world was changing, though parts of Scandinavia would stay stubbornly pagan well beyond Cnut's reign.

Cnut's active life took its toll, and he died on 12 November 1035 at Shaftesbury, Dorset – where the tomb of the martyred English king and saint, Edward, resided. He was buried in the great Anglo-Saxon royal mausoleum in Winchester. Here, he metaphorically rubbed shoulders with other English kings and saints, another sign of a king who wished to assimilate rather than dictate to his English subjects.

Throughout his life, Cnut had acted respectively towards the English royal family he had replaced. His magnanimity marked him out as a wise man, able to build bridges with the people that he had conquered. Although he taxed his people heavily, they seemingly accepted his right to rule them; he gave them peace and security, a welcome contrast to the four decades that preceded his reign.

The greatness of Cnut's achievements in building an extended kingdom that encompassed both England and Scandinavia can perhaps best be demonstrated by how quickly his 'empire' began to fall apart after his death. Without his great energy, vision and drive, his successors were incapable of keeping it together. His sons, Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut, both became king in due course, but neither lasted for very long nor gave any indication that had they lived, they would have been successful monarchs.

Harold became the sole king of England after Cnut's death but died himself soon after. As a result, Harthacnut then became king, but he too did not survive very long, dying after overindulging at a wedding feast. With none of Cnut's sons now living, in 1042 the throne reverted back to the Anglo-Saxon bloodline when Edward 'the Confessor' became king.

Cnut was a capable king of England and Denmark, dexterously managing England's great wealth and emulating some of the significant elements of government to build a strong nation-state in Denmark. Although the practical results of King Cnut's leadership were more deeply felt in the long run in Denmark than in England, his reign was nonetheless a fascinating period in English and European history and a remarkable achievement in its own right.

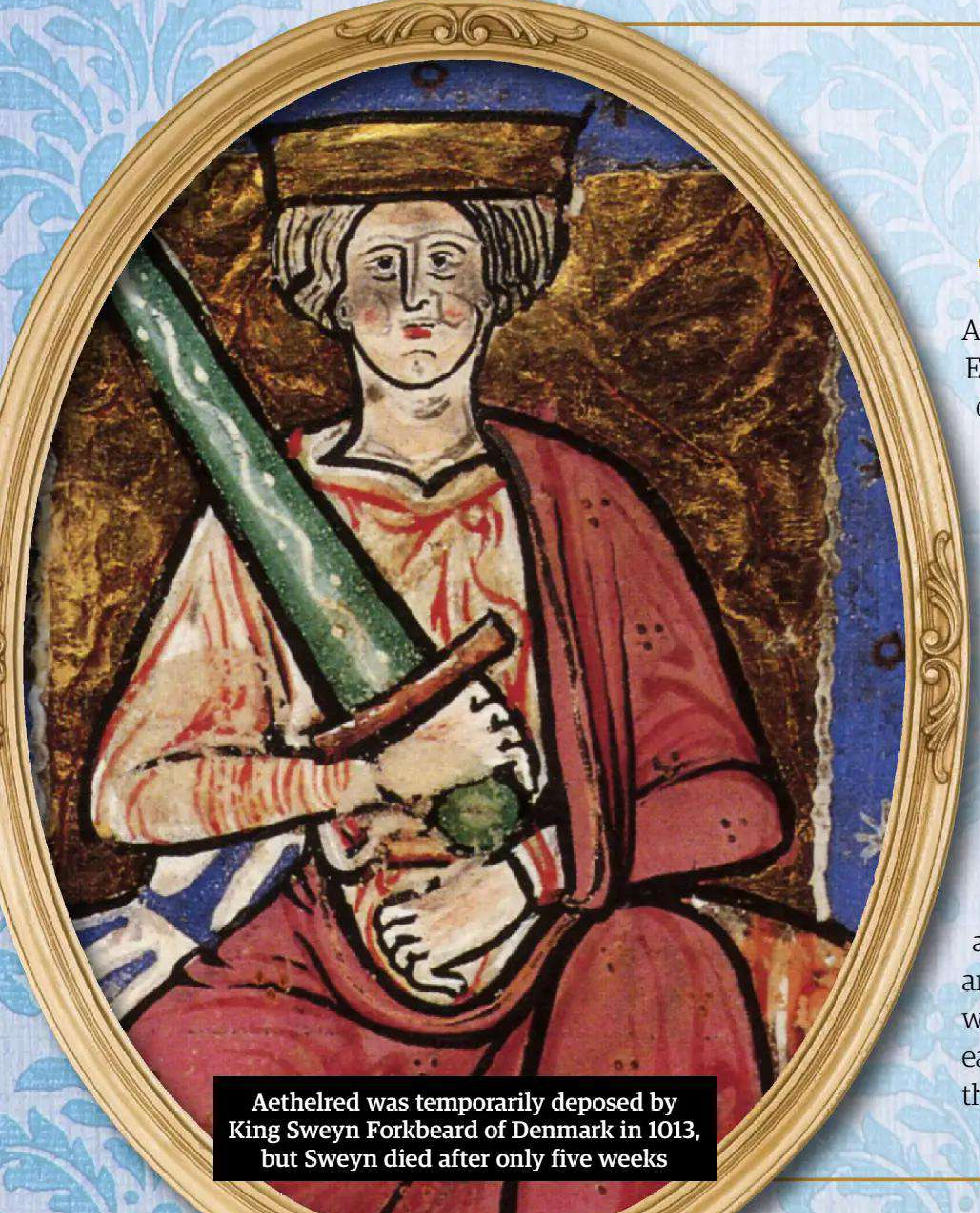
Images Getty Images, Alamy, Mary Evans, Mariusz Paździora/CC BY-SA 3.0 (cathedral)

Babes *on the* Throne

Meet the underage kings who ruled entire nations before they were old enough to shave

Words **Scott Reeves**

It's a problem that has struck most monarchies at one time or another in their history: a king isn't able to choose the manner and timing of their death. In an ideal world, they move on to the heavenly realm when their chosen heir is ready to rule. But disease, deposition, warfare and simple bad luck has meant that many kings shifted off this mortal coil before their successor had reached adulthood – sometimes they weren't even out of nappies. From crazy kings to record-breaking rulers, here are some of the children who found themselves sitting on the throne, when they really should have been on a rocking horse.



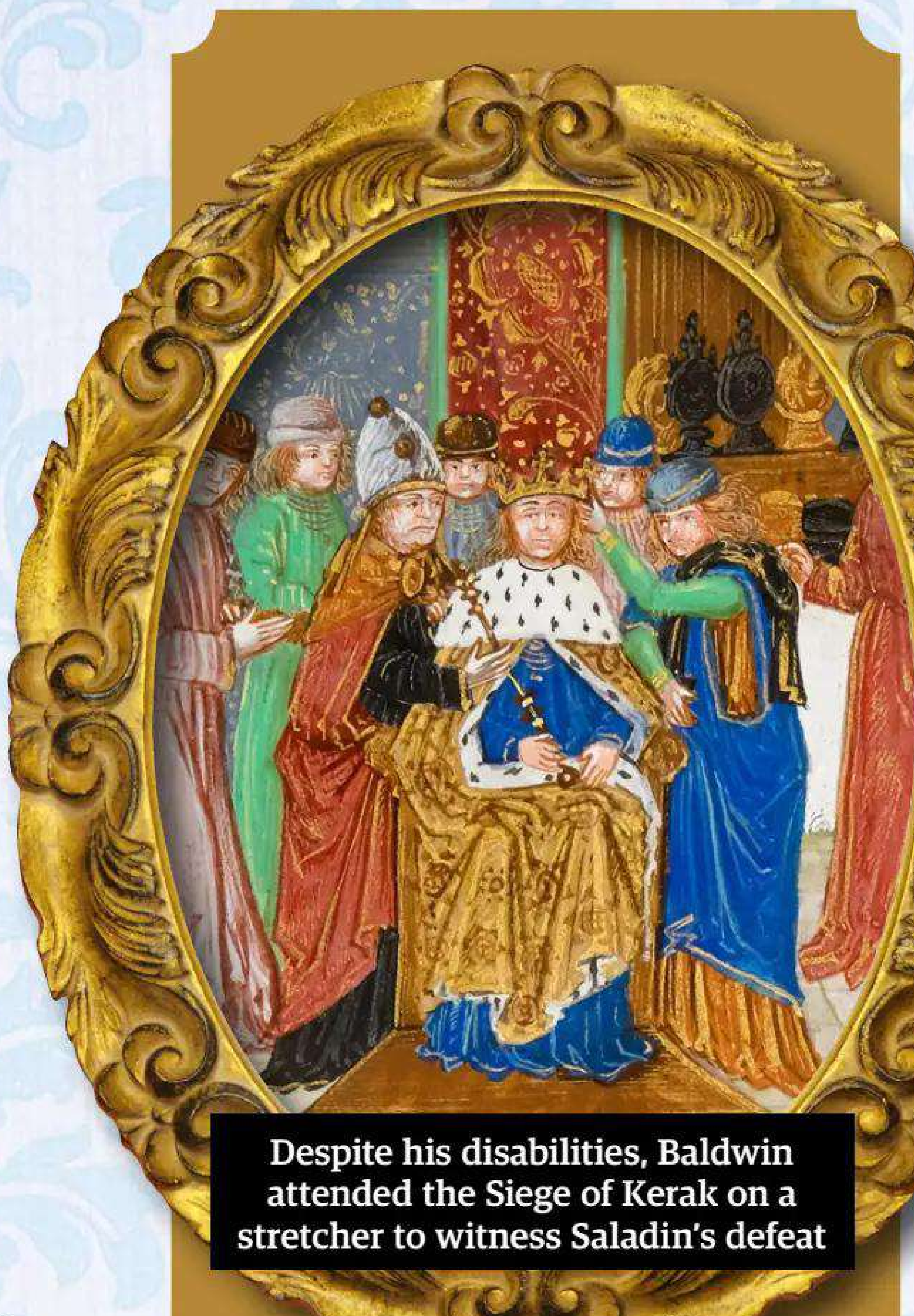
Aethelred was temporarily deposed by King Sweyn Forkbeard of Denmark in 1013, but Sweyn died after only five weeks

Aethelred II

Not ready to rule

England, 978-1013

Aethelred the Unready ascended to the English throne at the age of 12 in difficult circumstances – his predecessor half-brother, Edward the Martyr, was assassinated. Exactly who was responsible for Edward's death is unclear, though it may have been nobles who wanted to put young Aethelred on the throne so they could control the kingdom through him. Aethelred did provide a semblance of stability – he ruled for 37 years – but it was an era when England was in almost constant conflict with the Vikings. Aethelred's monicker is often misunderstood. Rather than suggesting he was unready to rule (which might be apt, considering his early accession), 'unready' means 'poorly advised' and was a pun on Aethelred's own name, which means 'well advised'. Presumably, the early medieval chroniclers who came up with the title thought it was hilarious.



Despite his disabilities, Baldwin attended the Siege of Kerak on a stretcher to witness Saladin's defeat

Baldwin IV

The leper king

Jerusalem, 1174-1185

It became clear during childhood that something was wrong with poor Baldwin's body, but only when he acceded the throne at the age of 13 was he diagnosed with leprosy. Baldwin's subjects may have been uneasy that their ruler had a debilitating disease that carried with it social stigma, but there was no real alternative in the line of succession. Despite many contemporaries' misgivings, though, Baldwin went on to prove himself as a capable ruler. He gradually lost the use of his hands and feet and went blind, but Baldwin chose capable advisers and regents to help him. He kept Saladin's armies at bay and died at the age of 24, leaving his kingdom in the hands of another child monarch: seven-year-old Baldwin V.

> *"Baldwin went on to prove himself a capable leader… he chose advisers to help him"*

Images Alamy, Getty images

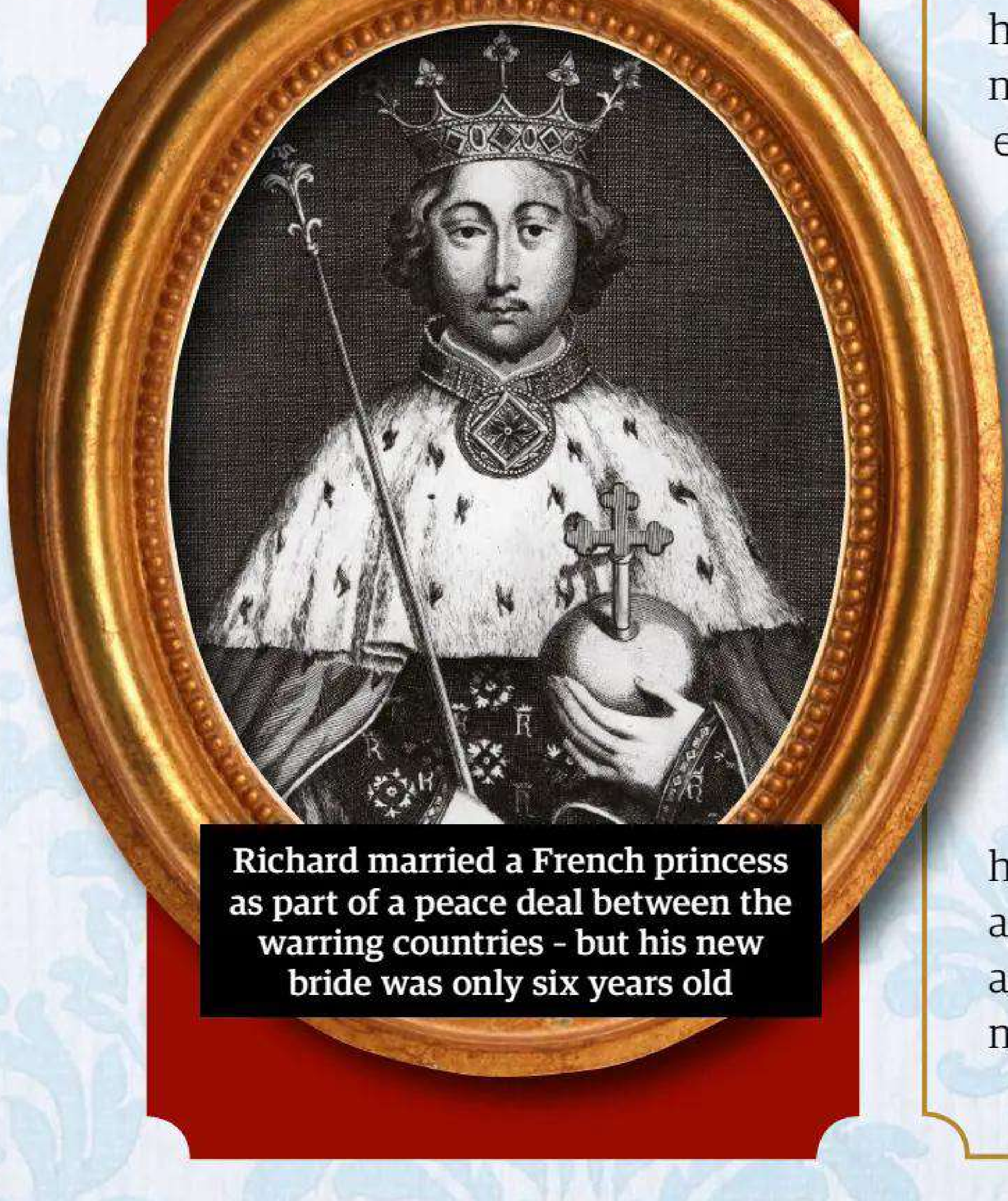
Richard II of England

The revolting king

England, 1377-1399

Richard became King of England at ten years of age due to his father predeceasing him, meaning Richard was next in line when his grandfather, Edward III, finally died. What followed was a rollercoaster of a reign. Richard survived the Peasants' Revolt, in no small part because he faced down the rebels himself despite only being 14 years old. But Richard faced further upheaval later in his reign when his nobles also turned against him. The nobles ignored Richard's self-proclaimed divine right to rule and deposed him in favour of his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, who assumed the throne as Henry IV. Richard's life ended a few months later in captivity, probably starved to death in a cell in Pontefract Castle.

> *"Richard survived the Peasants' Revolt, in no small part because he faced down the rebels"*



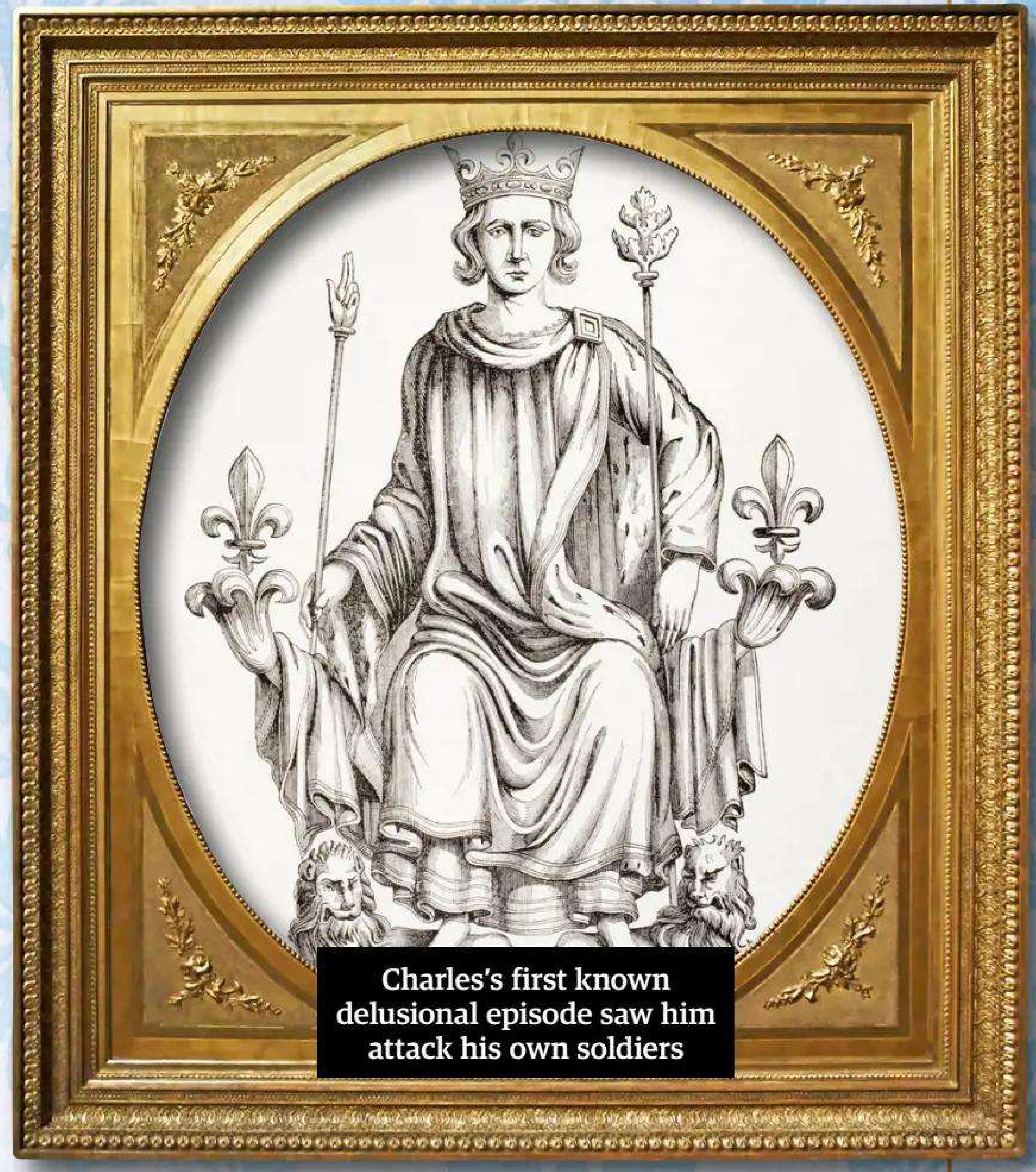
Richard married a French princess as part of a peace deal between the warring countries - but his new bride was only six years old

Charles VI

The mad monarch

France, 1380-1422

Charles was 11 when his father died, and he inherited a kingdom in a good position. That was soon squandered, though, when Charles's regency council fought among themselves. Charles could have dismissed his regents when he turned 14, but he chose to keep them on until he was 21. Perhaps that was an early sign that all was not right with the young king. Charles began to suffer bouts of psychosis and mental illness, including a famous episode when he believed he was made of glass and might shatter if touched. As his condition worsened, France was left in the hands of regents once again, until Charles died at the age of 53. In theory, the crown passed to another child king who went on to suffer bouts of insanity - Henry VI of England - but Charles VII seized the throne instead.



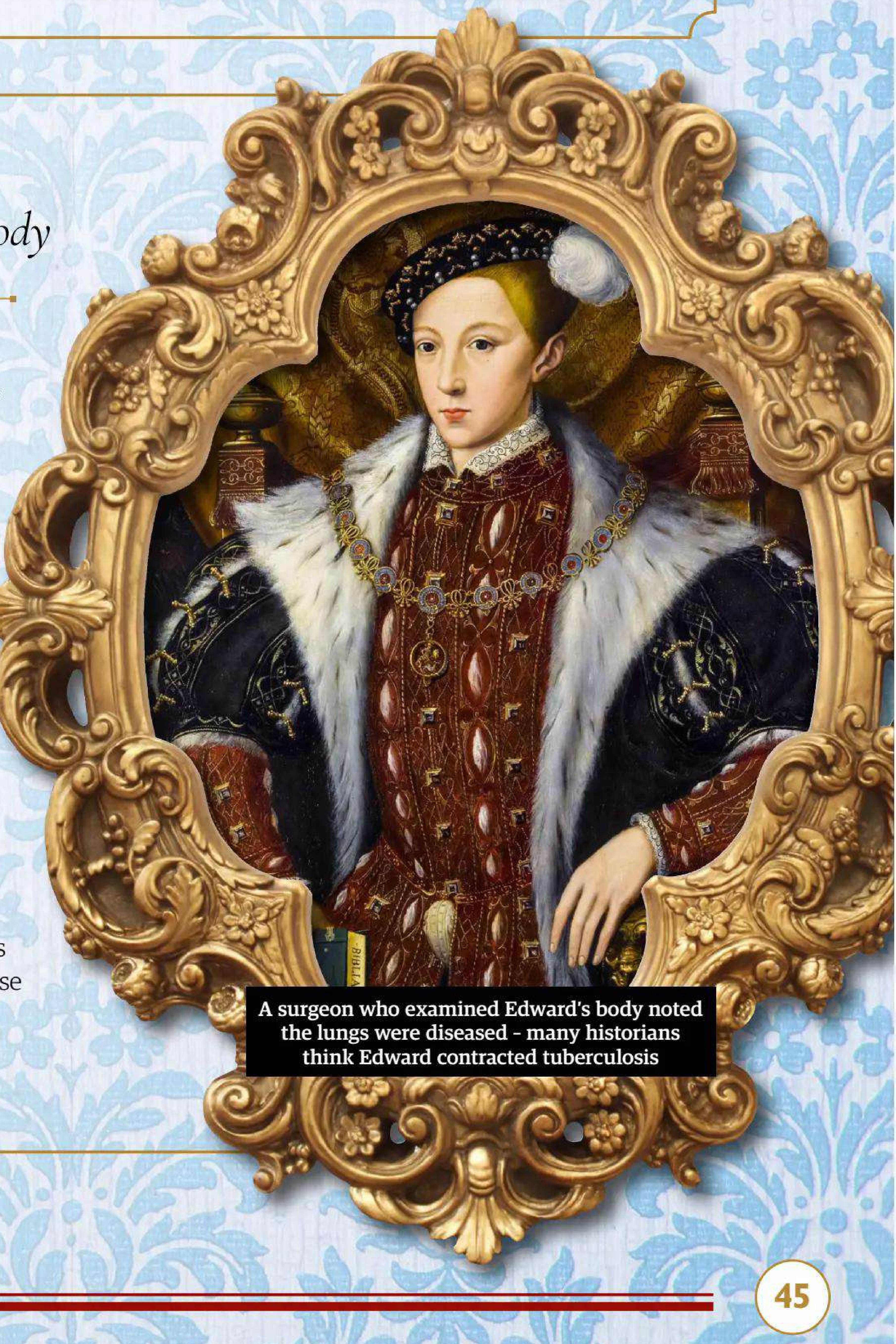
Charles's first known delusional episode saw him attack his own soldiers

Edward VI

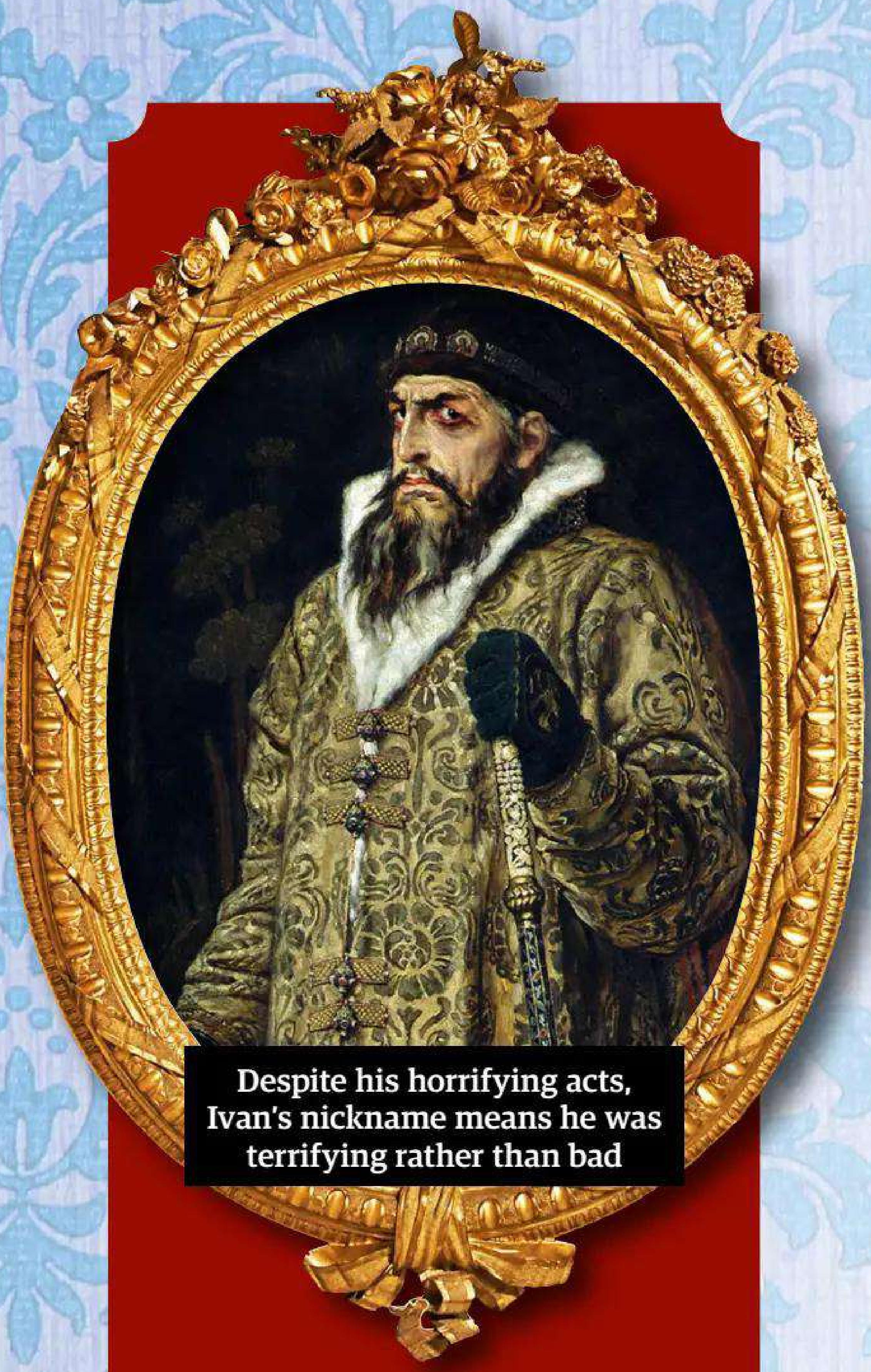
Strong of mind, weak of body

England, 1547-1553

Henry VIII famously went through six wives in his quest for a male heir, but he actually got one on the third try when Jane Seymour gave birth. Traditional history dictates that Henry kept marrying because his son, Edward, endured a sickly childhood and didn't seem destined to live long. Edward became king at the age of nine and his reign was dominated by two regents - his uncle, Edward Seymour, and John Dudley. They both pushed through religious reforms to make England a Protestant country - a cause Edward felt strongly about - but the king fell ill in 1553 and struggled to recover. Edward died six months later and was succeeded by his half-sister Mary, who soon reversed course and made England a Catholic country again. All that effort by Henry and his male heir only lasted seven years.



A surgeon who examined Edward's body noted the lungs were diseased - many historians think Edward contracted tuberculosis



Despite his horrifying acts, Ivan's nickname means he was terrifying rather than bad

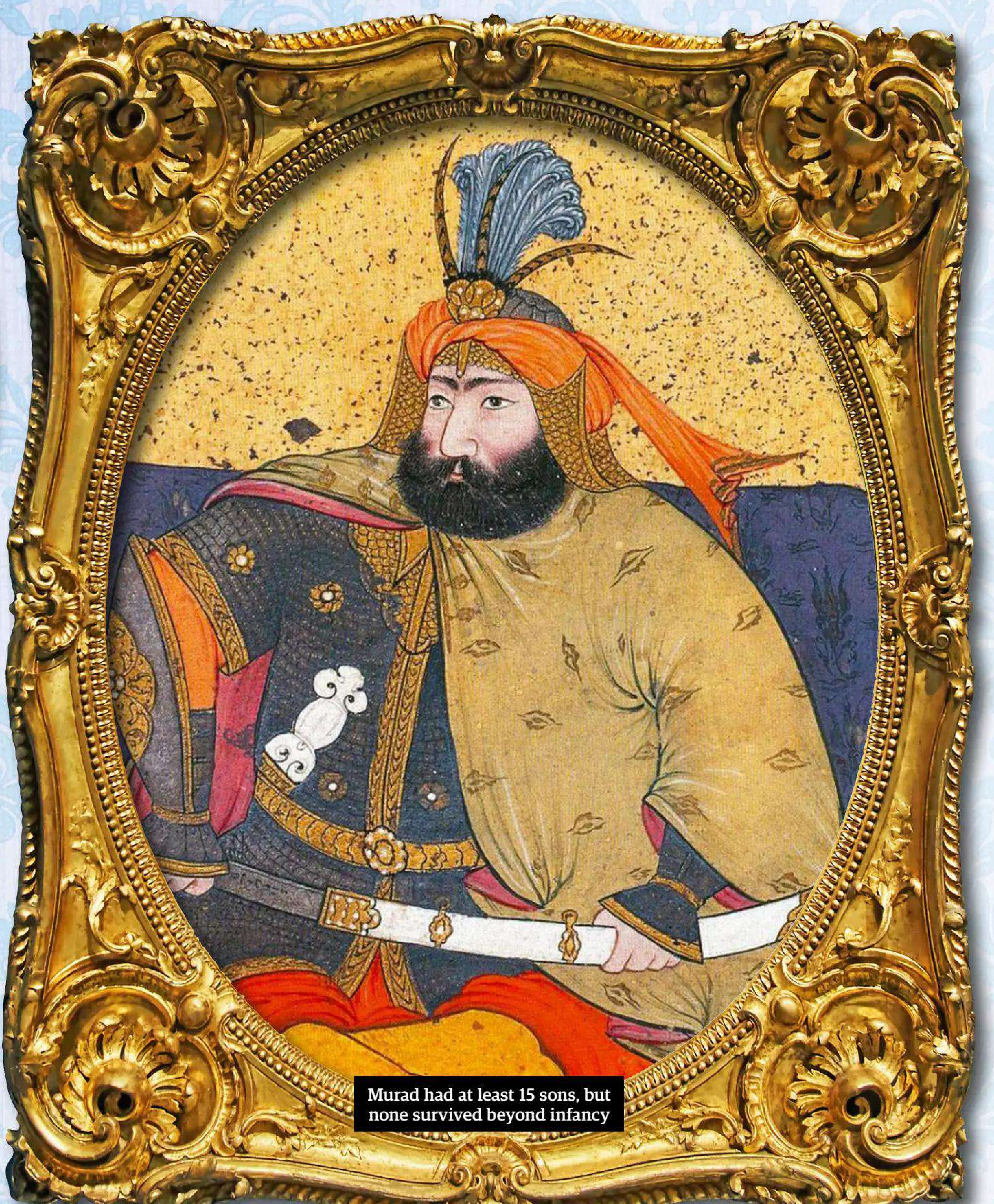
Ivan IV

The terrible tsar

Russia, 1533-1584

Three-year-old Ivan succeeded his father as Grand Prince of Moscow and all Russia, and his reign was initially supervised by his mother – but she died (possibly poisoned) when he was eight. After that, young Ivan was fought over by feuding families. It wasn't ideal conditions to raise a sensible, grounded ruler, and the rest of Ivan's reign would prove he was damaged by his tough upbringing. Ivan transformed his nation from a medieval principality into a mighty empire and was the first ruler to the crowned Tsar of Russia, but he was prone to violent outbursts. During one of his rages, Ivan is believed to have murdered his own son and heir. Actions such as those have led historians to dub the first tsar as Ivan the Terrible.

> *"During one of his rages, Ivan is believed to have murdered his own son"*



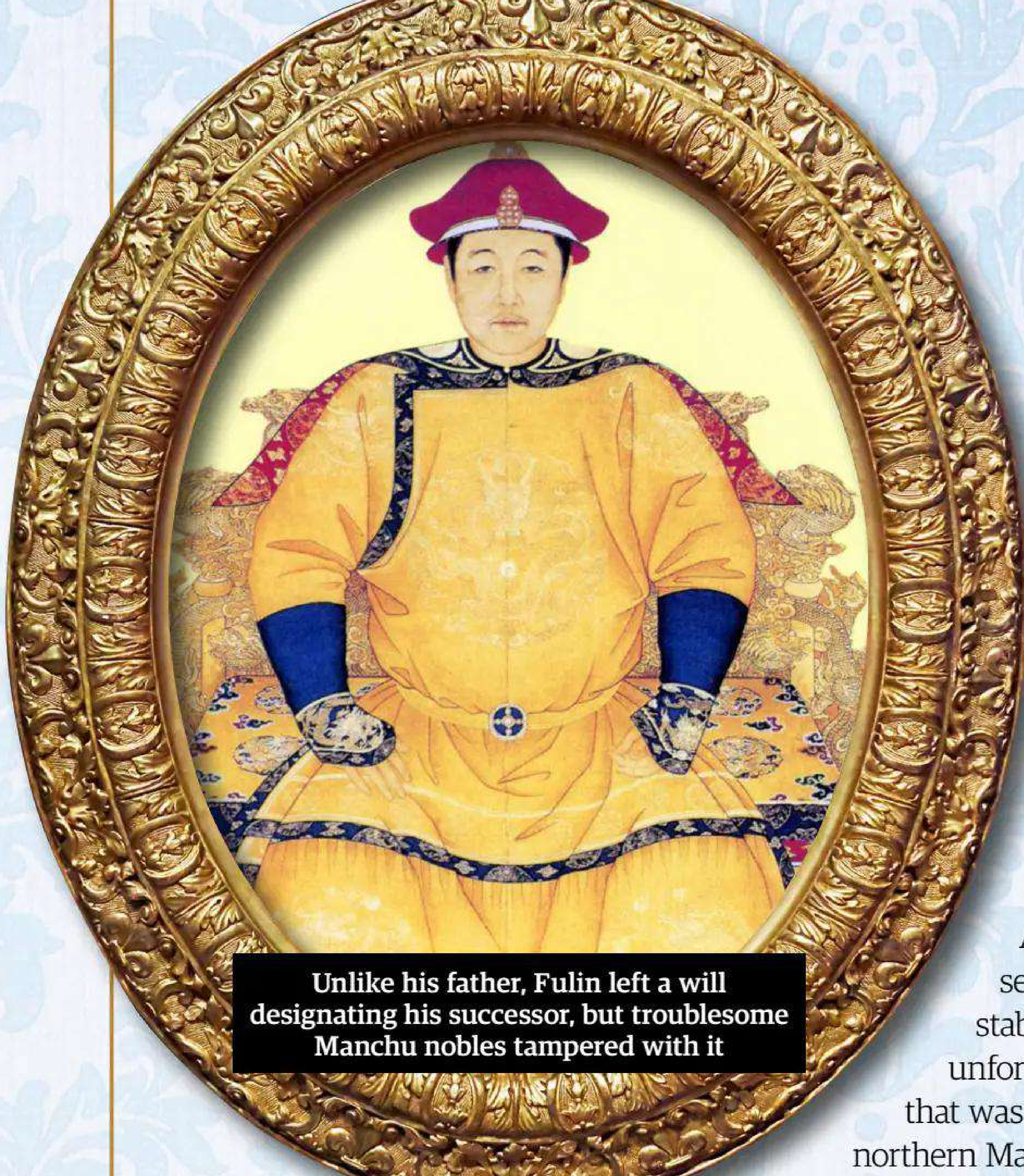
Murad had at least 15 sons, but none survived beyond infancy

Murad IV

The child caliph

Ottoman Empire, 1623-1640

Murad came to the throne after his uncle, Mustafa I, was deposed in a coup for the second time. Murad was still only 11, so power actually flowed through his mother, Kösem Sultan, who became one of the most influential women in Ottoman history thanks to her control of government. Murad eventually took the reins himself and managed to capture Baghdad in a war with Persia, but he died from liver disease at the age of 27. Murad was succeeded by his mentally ill brother, who was later deposed and succeeded by another child emperor, which brought Kösem Sultan back to power as regent for a second time – the Topkapi Palace was not short of intrigue during this breathless period in Ottoman history.



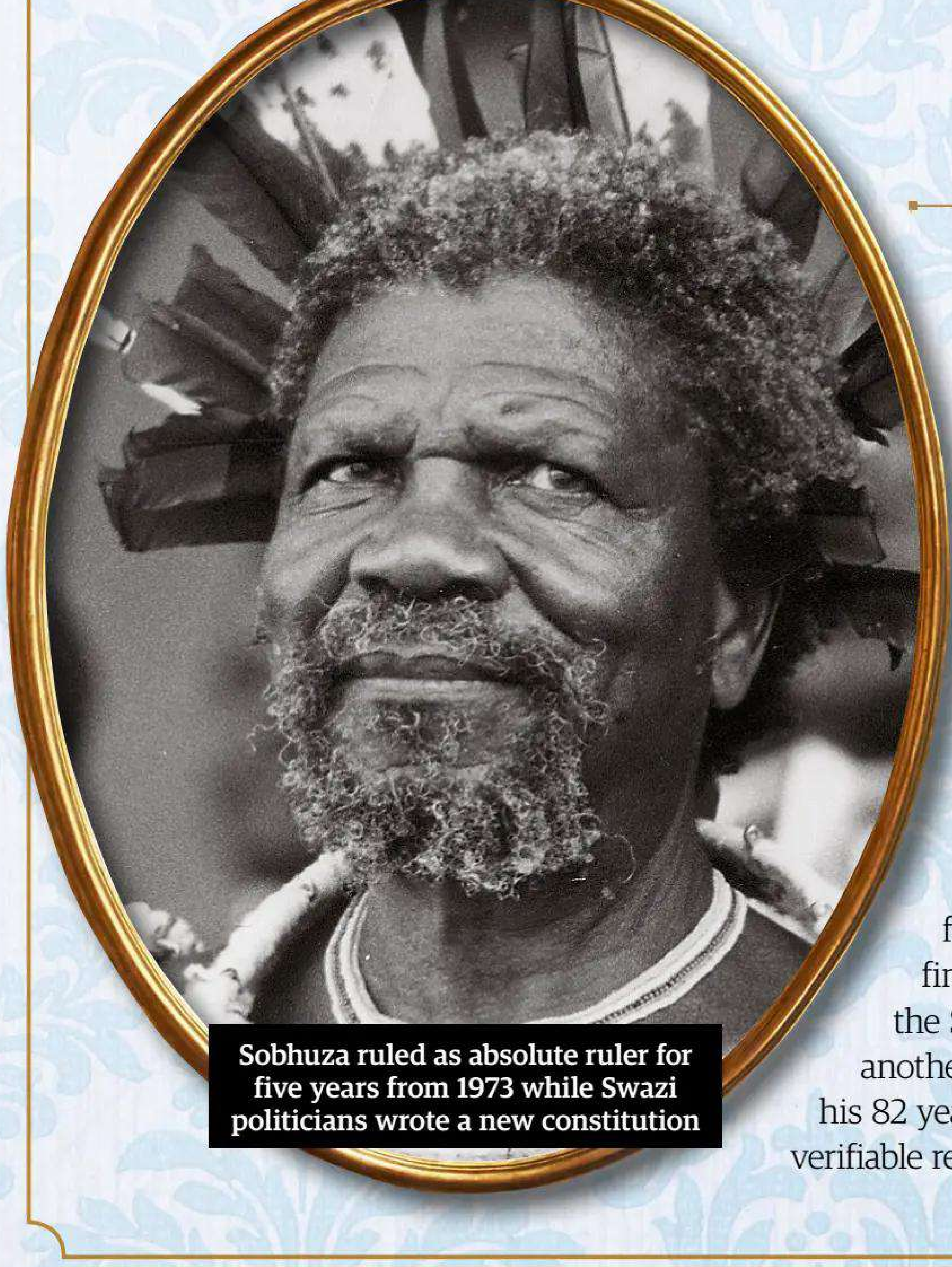
Unlike his father, Fulin left a will designating his successor, but troublesome Manchu nobles tampered with it

Fulin

The Shunzhi Emperor

China, 1643-1661

When Fulin's father died in 1643, he hadn't named an heir. The Chinese kingdom risked falling into civil war, but a committee of princes selected five-year-old Fulin as their next ruler to calm the smouldering nation. The princes hoped to rule China in his stead, but after the death of regent Dorgon in 1650, Fulin chose to assume the powers of government himself. He made it his mission to fight corruption within the ranks of his own Manchu nobility, while protecting his new ruling dynasty from loyalists of the old Ming dynasty. After consolidating Qing power and setting in motion nearly 300 years of stable Qing rule, Fulin died at 22. He was unfortunate to contract smallpox, a disease that was rife in China, but one to which the northern Manchus had developed little immunity.



Sobhuza ruled as absolute ruler for five years from 1973 while Swazi politicians wrote a new constitution

Sobhuza II

The longest reign

Swaziland, 1899-1982

Sobhuza was only four months old when his father died unexpectedly, thrusting baby Sobhuza onto the throne of Swaziland. Since he was unable to rule in person, Sobhuza's grandmother and uncle led the nation in his place – but Swaziland was part of the British Empire, and the royal family had little more than a ceremonial role. After Sobhuza assumed the throne in his own right at the age of 22, he began a cautious but determined campaign for independence. When that was finally granted in 1968, Sobhuza was still the Swazi king – and he remained there for another 14 years. Sobhuza died in 1982, and his 82 years and 254 days as king is the longest verifiable reign of any monarch.

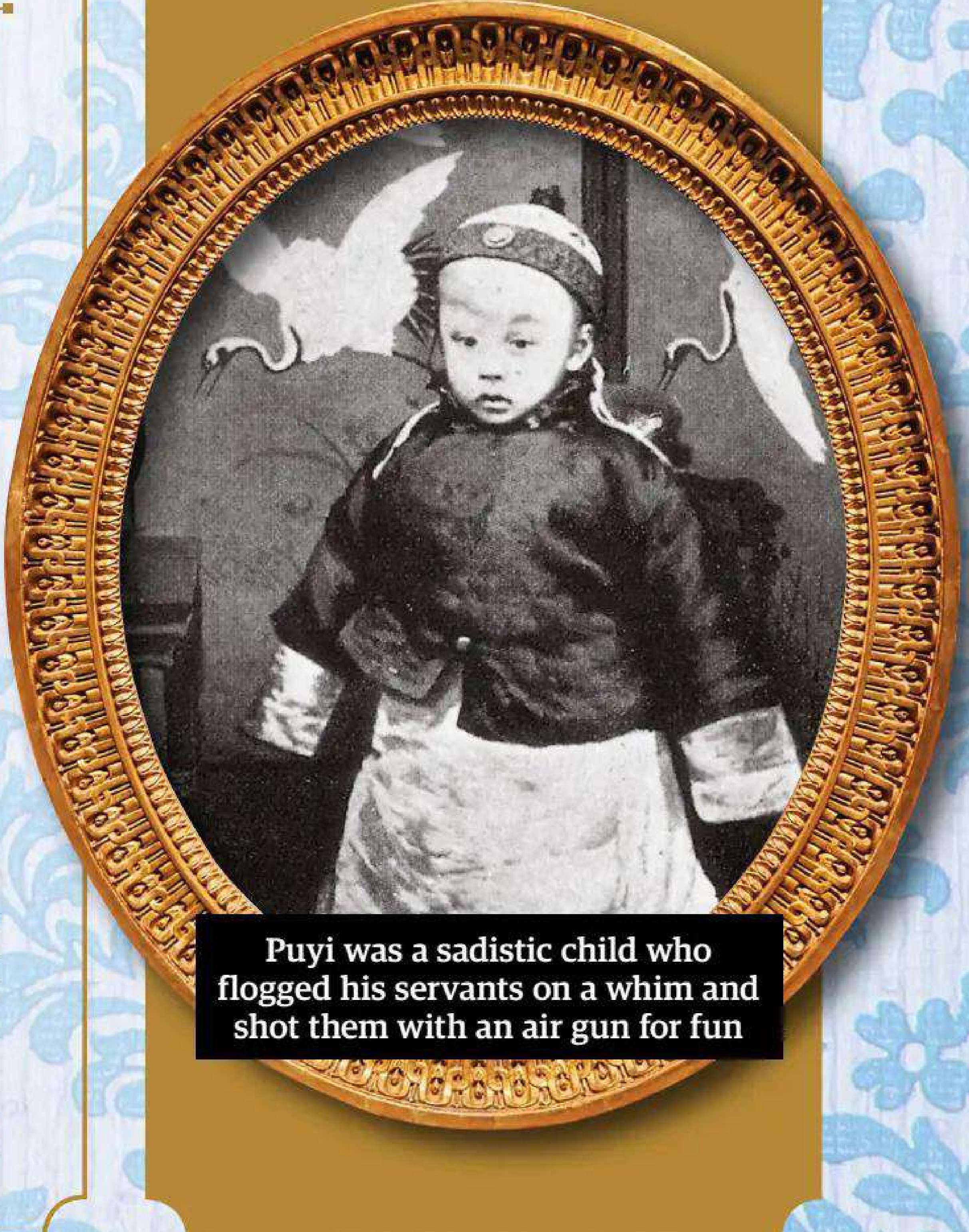
Puyi

The last emperor

China, 1908-1912

Puyi was only two years old when he was named Emperor of China, and his reign had an inauspicious start. During his crowning, the noise of the drums startled the young boy and moved him to tears. Puyi grew up a temperamental child, surrounded by eunuchs who failed to discipline him, but his short reign ended when he was deposed by nationalist revolutionaries at the age of six. The last Chinese emperor was briefly restored to power in a military coup at the age of 11, then appointed a puppet Emperor of Manchukuo following the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s. Each time, Puyi was removed from power again. The three-time deposed emperor ended his life as a rehabilitated communist citizen, having never once held imperial power on his own terms.

> *"His reign ended when deposed by nationalist revolutionaries at the age of six"*



Puyi was a sadistic child who flogged his servants on a whim and shot them with an air gun for fun

Images: Alamy, Getty Images

VLIELMAS .
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WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

Facing powerful enemies and resistance at every turn, the Norman king stamped the British Isles into submission through a mixture of political and military power, paving the way for England to become a Medieval powerhouse

As the dust settled on the field at Hastings, the elation felt by William the Conqueror must have been short-lived. He had won the battle and vanquished his most powerful rival for the English throne, but now he faced what must have been a daunting task; the consolidation of his power and rule over England. Despite having gained military supremacy, he would have to contend with multiple uprisings throughout his reign. These would interfere with his most pressing task: securing the Duchy of Normandy against the French and other enemies. His belief in his birthright to rule England would push him to secure the kingdom, but the vast majority of his time was spent on the continent.

It took ten weeks for William and his army to conquer England after Hastings, although it would take years of hard work and violence to totally subdue the country. William's power when he first came across the Channel was linked to his personal character, a trait that stemmed from his position as Duke of Normandy. In Normandy he did not rule by divine right or with a crown, but instead with martial prowess and political intrigue. This can be seen in how he raised his forces for the invasion. As a duke he was first among equals. Not able to levy an army or raise his own taxes he relied on 'Joint Stock', an agreement where he would promise lands in England for all those willing to fight with him. This was an inviting proposal, and after carrying the day at Hastings and being crowned in London, he set about keeping this obligation.

While the wholesale replacement of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy must have seemed cataclysmic at the time for those involved, it was a much more merciful move than they could have expected. In 1016 when King Cnut had seized the English crown, he had some of the elite massacred and replaced with his own Scandinavian followers.

> *"It took ten weeks for William and his army to conquer England after Hastings"*

This mercy ensured that the Normans would not face a national rebellion, and while they were plagued with uprisings in the early years of William's reign, these were all localised unrest. Many of them were started for personal gain, making William's position immediately stronger than would-be conquerors before him.

It took six months for him to feel secure enough to return to Normandy after the invasion and in the first years of his reign, William found it very difficult to personally be out of the country for any great length of time.

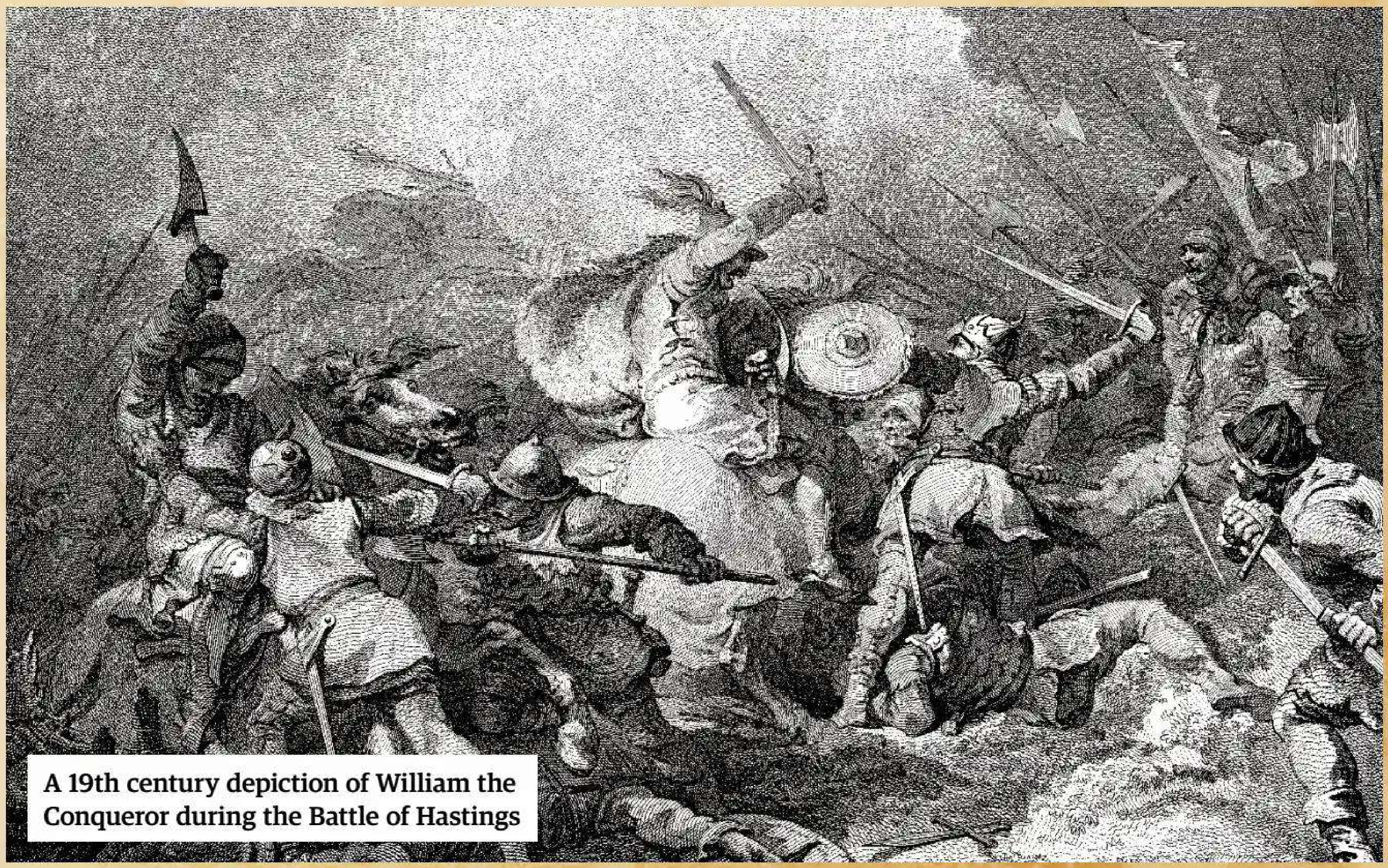
Living in England after the Norman invasion must have felt like a double-edged sword. On one hand, many towns suffered badly as a direct result of the conquest, with streets and buildings being demolished to make way for castles. It took several decades for them to recover. Despite this, urban centres continued to grow under Norman rule.

Carrying on from the actions of earlier Anglo-Saxon kings, William and his Norman successors continued to found new towns and villages throughout England, helping stimulate economic growth. Over 150 new urban centres were established including Hull, Liverpool, King's Lynn and Newcastle. The creation of a new town was no small feat and needed a significant capital investment to organise street planning, the setting up of marketplaces and the establishment of a church. With trade being the lifeblood of a Medieval town, the revenues gathered would fill the royal coffers, making urban growth very profitable.

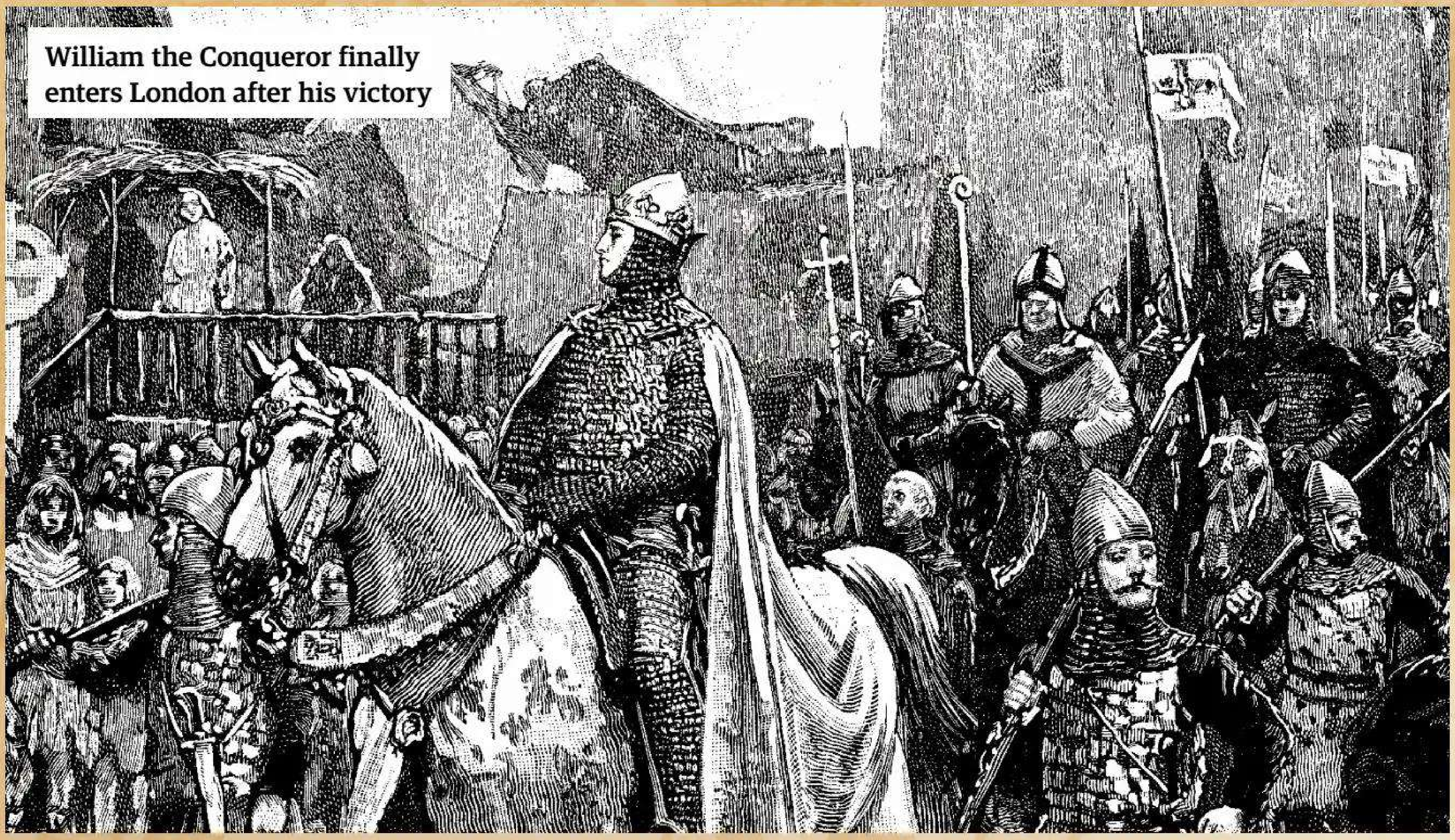
Towns were used in the invasion and subjugation of Wales by William as a way to supply the castles constructed and ensure the loyalty of the local population. They often needed walls of their own – English traders could carry out their business knowing that the king had their well-being in mind. The population had grown after 1066, seeing towns more populated, even though roughly 80 per cent of the people still lived in the countryside.

William was lucky to inherit the English monetary system, and throughout the land there were 40 towns where coins could be minted.

Images: Alamy (main), Getty Images


A 19th century depiction of William the Conqueror during the Battle of Hastings

> *"To further cement his claim, William kept and used Edward the Confessor's seal"*


William the Conqueror finally enters London after his victory

William the Conqueror relied on his personal charisma and influence to gather loyal men around him for the invasion and ruling of England

With England being one of the only western countries to be minting its own coins, one of its greatest assets was its national tax-gathering system. With this level of control over the currency, William was able to ensure that only his image would be found on English coins. This was a tactic that had been used for thousands of years and enabled William to project his power to every corner of the British Isles without much effort. In a time when the average inhabitant of England might only see the king a few times in their life, if at all, William's face on their money was a reminder of who was in charge. It also helped him legitimise his usurpation of the English crown.

Although more of a passive consequence of the Norman conquest, the ascension of William to the throne saw a marked decline in slavery. The practice had largely disappeared from Normandy in the 1030s. Slaves from raids in England, Scotland and Ireland were captured and traded within the British Isles and 1066 was the first invasion that did not see the number of slaves in the country rise. While to our eyes this would seem like a positive step, William was reluctant to get rid of slavery – he would stand to profit from the trade. It would continue, albeit in decline, until after the king's death when the

CONSOLIDATING POWER

C.1028

William the Conqueror is born
William is born in Normandy. His early life is plagued by unsuccessful assassination attempts, which shape him into a hard figure.

C.1050S

Promised the crown
Now duke of Normandy, William is promised the crown of England by Edward the Confessor who maybe makes the trip to Normandy to seal the deal.

6 JAN 1066

King Harold
As Edward the Confessor dies, the Anglo-Saxon Harold Godwinson takes the throne, although he is not without enemies, mainly William and Harald Hardrada.

SEPT 1066

William crosses the Channel
Gathering men who would fight for land and wealth around him, William crosses the Channel along with thousands of men and horses.

OCT 1066

Battle of Hastings
William and the Normans win the day at Hastings after the death of Harold Godwinson. Eager to shore up his claim, William secures the south of England, including London.

25 DEC 1066

William takes the throne
William is crowned on Christmas Day in London. Due to a misunderstanding caused by the language barrier, William's men start several fires and a riot breaks out while the ceremony takes place.

1067

Invasion of Wales
Welsh raids prompts William to create new Earldoms to combat this threat. These men are given autonomy and slowly extend Norman control into the region.

Council of Westminster issued a decree that some interpret as banning the practice in 1102.

An important administrative contribution in William's reign was the commission of the Domesday Book. William and his advisors commissioned it in 1085, but work on it is generally assumed to have stopped when the king died two years later.

The contents of the Domesday Book are the first serious attempt to catalogue the main taxable possessions in England. It was not a national survey, but a way for William to find out the wealth of the country. Armed with this knowledge, he could look for a way to exploit wealthy landowners. This view is supported by the fact that the writers of the book were only interested in the rents of properties and ignored things like livestock. The Domesday Book can be seen as an oppressive measure, as it was a way to control the population and gather more taxes.

As seen from his general actions and the fact that he spent most of his time on the Continent, England was a secondary concern for William. There was a land with an effective administrative system already in place that could fill the Conqueror's coffers. Instead of implementing a totally alien governmental system on the country, William just modified what was already in place and working.

Unfortunately, the Normans did not fully understand the Anglo-Saxon system that they inherited. It was built to be administered from a central power base, something that the Normans did not understand. As a duchy, Normandy did not have a 'state' or centralised government. Each man would be driven by the desire for personal gain or glory, not loyalty to an ideal of a country. Faced with this new system, the Norman administrators tailored it.

One of the first changes he made was to do with the government charters. From 1066-69 they were all written in Old English, a language that William did not speak or read a word of. This was obviously a large concern for him, so from 1069 onwards, all government documents started to be written in French.

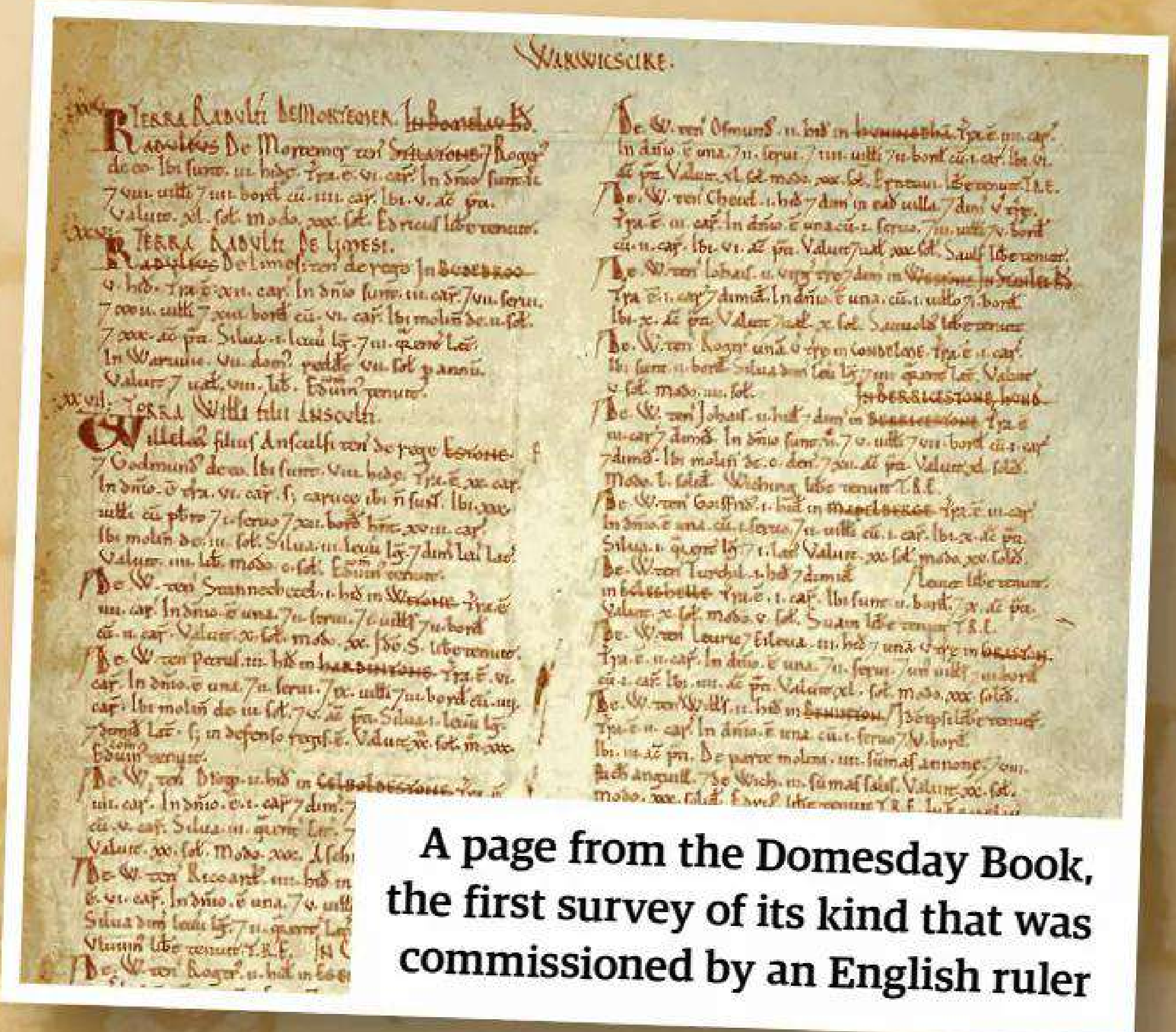
To further cement his claim, William kept and used Edward the Confessor's seal. This seemingly small act ensured that all government documents showed William, not Harold, to be Edward's successor, helping his claim seem legitimate and also eroding Harold's standing within the minds of his subjects, meaning public opinion would seem to favour William. Changing the charter language also blurred the lines between the Norman and Anglo-Saxon cultures, intermingling the two.

Changing land laws was also a method devised by William and his confidants to help secure his holdings as king. Land was taken away from individual possession and all held in kind by the throne. William would then give out parcels of land to the Norman upper classes - usually men who had fought for William at Hastings - to hold in vassalage. This ensured that the king held ultimate authority and secured the loyalty of many of his subjects with promises of wealth and power.

The Forest Laws also showed the might of William's power. This new system saw the king take control of a forest for hunting game, such as deer or boar. The local population were forbidden to use forests in their entirety - a problem seeing as many used it as a source of sustenance. Even the local elite were not exempt from this oppressive law, showing the king held ultimate power and that no one could climb high enough to escape his grasp.

Social law was also modified under the Normans, mostly as a way to ensure Norman supremacy. Like the Forest Laws, these were largely oppressive and kept the local population under control. The Murder Fine, for instance, stated that if a Norman was murdered and no perpetrator was found, the entire area would have to pay a fine until the culprit was discovered. It was an obvious incentive for locals to turn on each other and would keep peasants from killing their lords as they could not shoulder the fines for very long. This is exactly what the Normans wanted; to keep local populations occupied instead of talking to neighbours about a rebellion.

These administrative laws show just how marginalised the Anglo-Saxons had become. The word of an Englishman by itself would not hold much weight in the eyes of the law. In fact,



A page from the Domesday Book, the first survey of its kind that was commissioned by an English ruler

THE CONQUEROR & THE PONTIFF

While Duke William was his own man who forged his own path, there was someone he sought a blessing from before beginning his invasion: Pope Alexander II. The head of the Catholic Church, located in the Vatican, wielded great political power in western Christendom. Seen by Catholics as God's representative on Earth, his blessing for the invasion of England would lend William all the legitimacy he needed, regardless of offers that may have been made before.

Although Alexander's blessing is only recorded to have been given after the conquest succeeded, it is possible that he supplied William with a papal banner to use during his invasion, which suggests he acted with the full support of the pontiff.

The duke also secured the endorsement of other European figures to lend political support for the invasion, namely Holy Roman Emperor Henry V and King Sweyn II of Denmark. Although these might sound impressive, the emperor was but a child and Sweyn was more likely to come down on the side of Harold Godwinson.

William's papal blessing also meant that the English church would fully support their new Norman overlords, meaning that Norman/Anglo-Saxon relations were better than expected. The English church could fully integrate with the new Norman government knowing that God's representative on Earth supported their actions.

1067

Leaving the country
William feels his new kingdom is secure enough to return to Normandy. He spends most of his rule on the continent fighting the various encroachments into his duchy.

1067 ONWARDS

Rebellion rises
A string of uprisings threaten William's rule, like those led by Hereward the Wake and the northern counties. These uprisings are fuelled by local grievances.

1069-70

Harrying of the North
In an effort to cow the troublesome northern counties once and for all, William engages in campaigns of terror and slaughter - the Harrying of the North.

1070

Papal coronation
William is symbolically crowned in London by three papal legates. This can be seen as the papal 'seal of approval' that legitimises William's actions in the eyes of the church.

1085

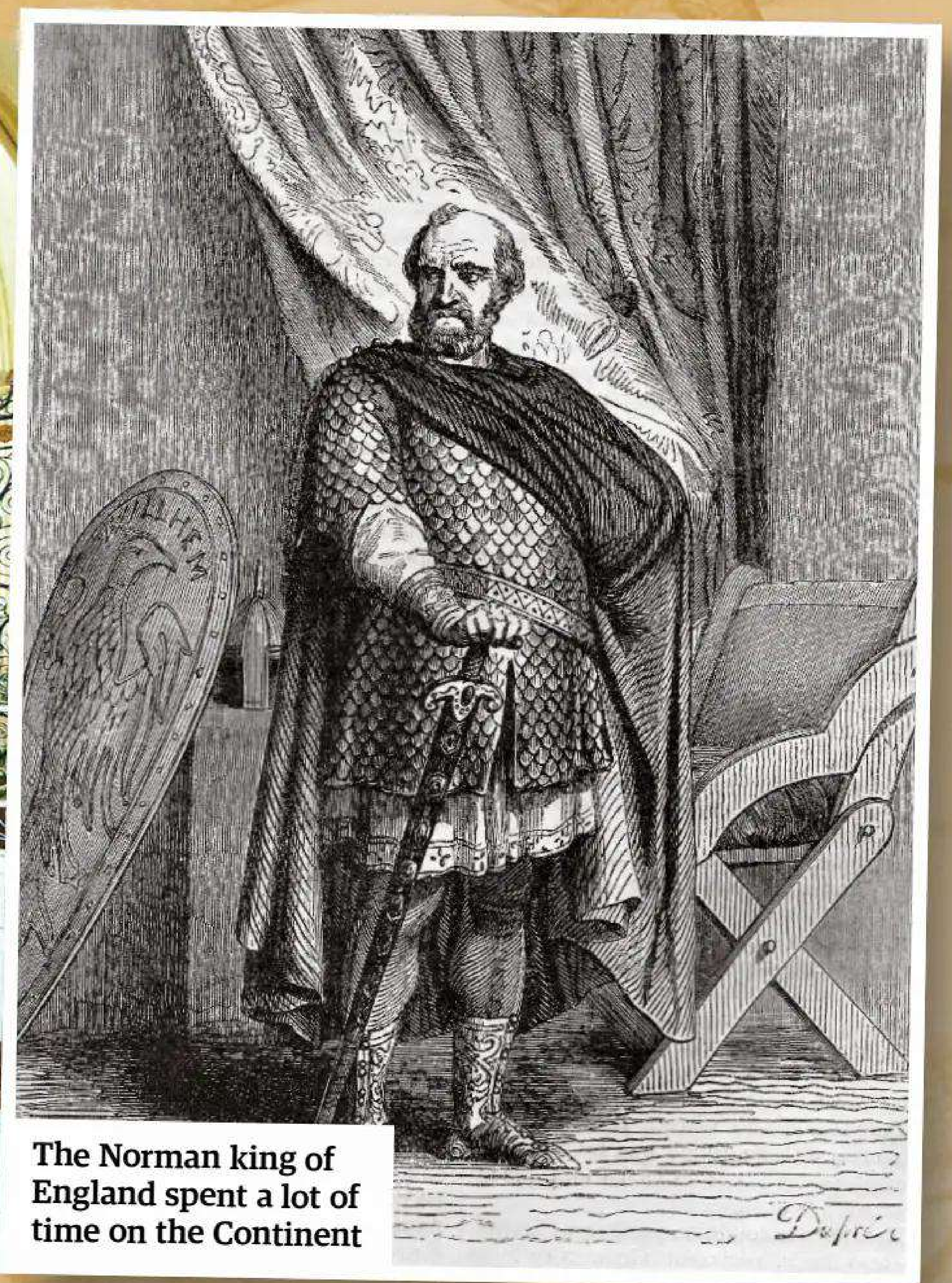
Domesday Book
In 1085, William commissions the writing of the Domesday Book, the first serious attempt to record the taxable holdings across England. It was also known as the book of judgement, which is where the odd name of Domesday comes from. Work is stopped when the king dies in 1087.

1087

William's death
William the Conqueror dies, and his realm is split between his two sons, with Normandy being considered the better kingdom. They join to create what becomes the Angevin Empire.

Images Getty Images

William's grave, at the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, is marked with a marble slab


The Norman king of England spent a lot of time on the Continent

> *"William was intent on starving out the rebellious factions in the north"*

having an English name and not being able to speak French or Latin would have automatically put you several rungs down the social ladder.

Usually, an Anglo-Saxon accused of a crime would need ten English witnesses or one Norman vouching for him in order to have his defence carry any respect. If the man could not gather together this support, trial by combat was also available, especially in disputes between Normans and Englishmen. The winner would be the last man standing.

But while most of the new laws were pro-Norman, there were smaller acts that would benefit most of the population and help the country in general. The Norman administration increased power to the local sheriffs, so they would have more authority in local affairs without direct permission from the local lord. As long as you were a Norman, or on good terms with one, you were in a better position than most of the population.

In the 11th century, England was not the only kingdom in the British Isles. To the north lay Scotland, whose king, Malcolm III, was extremely competent and a man whom William would lock horns with many times.

Due to its border with northern England, Scotland received many refugees, both noble and otherwise, who were fleeing the turmoil caused by the Norman invasion. From the failed rebellions of 1067-68, the steady advance of the Norman military machine up the British Isles drove these dispossessed people over the northern borders.

Linking up with the Anglo-Saxons still intent on making war, and sometimes even with the Danes, Malcolm sought to defend York from William's aggression. In 1069 he attacked the city, and while the near-contemporary sources say he lost many men, he then destroyed, either by fire or flood, the crops and food surrounding the town. William was intent on starving out the rebellious factions in the north, making sure that even when his forces had left the region, they would not be able to field any opposition against him.

A coin from the reign of William with his face stamped on it to help remind people who was in charge

With Malcolm throwing his lot in with Edgar Ætheling, Scottish and English forces would clash several times in the late 1060s. Raids and counter-raids were common, with southern Scotland, accessed via Cumbria, and the Northumbrian coast being on the receiving end of the violence. To further cement their alliance, Malcolm married Edgar's sister Margaret, who would go on to become Saint Margaret of Scotland and lend her name to places like Queensferry.

In 1072, William sailed north with a fleet, intending to bring Malcolm to heel. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentions the two kings meeting at Abernethy. Malcolm paid homage to William, gave his son as a hostage, and brokered a peace between William and Edgar. There would be relative peace between the two kingdoms until Scottish raids on Northumbria prompted the use of English military force again in 1080. This time Malcolm honoured the truce and a period of peace existed between the two kingdoms for the rest of William's reign.

The Scottish were not the only neighbours the Normans needed to deal with, though. To the west lay Wales, which had recently gone through massive upheaval caused by Gruffydd ap Llywelyn. In the early 1060s, he had united the Welsh kingdoms, but his victories over Mercia were short-lived. He was betrayed and killed by his own men three years before the Battle of Hastings. With Wales sliding back towards smaller independent kingdoms, it was in no shape to repel William and his Normans.

To start with, William wasn't overly concerned with Wales. After all, England was his birthright and he didn't seem to have any solid plans to occupy anything beyond it. It was only after securing England that William turned his attention to its neighbour, his hand being forced by Welsh raids.

To combat this he established the earldoms of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford, all given to men who had aggressive military tendencies. Interestingly enough, William gave them more autonomy than the rest of his kingdom, giving the earls greater control over their surrounding lands and towns. This ensured that the aggressive Normans, not having to answer to the king for matters concerning their local land, would extend their territory into Wales, protecting the English border. The policy was extremely effective. By 1086, the earl of Hereford had snuffed out the kingdom of Gwent; the earl of Shrewsbury secured Montgomery with a castle and had absorbed much of the borderland into his land; and the earl of Chester had also struck deeply into Welsh territory. William wouldn't live to see the end of the invasion, though, and after his death in 1087, his son William Rufus and subsequent kings would continue to push further into the country.

At the beginning of his rule, William and the Normans had to contend with a few years of sustained rebellion from the native Anglo-Saxons. After a brutal campaign followed by a period of systematic castle building, the local population was cowed; William had beaten the fight out of them. But when he had thought England secure, resistance was still simmering under the surface.

This time, trouble came from a different source. From 1072 onwards, William spent most of his time on the Continent, fending off invasion attempts from his neighbours. His long absences showed that the administrative and government structures he had set up in England worked efficiently, with the population content or afraid to rebel again. Instead, the last major rebellion against William came from within and was led by a man who had fought beside him at Hastings: Ralph de Guader, Earl of East Anglia.

Although he was born in England, Ralph's large Breton inheritance meant that he had sided with the Normans during the invasion and had fought to keep marauding Norsemen from wreaking havoc along the English coast in the years to follow. His grievance against the crown was William's refusal to allow him to marry the powerful earl of Hereford's daughter. The union of these two earldoms would have created a political powerhouse, not something the king wanted to deal with while he was defending his holdings in France.

The marriage went ahead without William's blessing, and the rebellion began in kind. Despite some support from the earl of Northumbria, the rising ran into trouble almost as soon as it began. Northumbria would prove to be their undoing as, having a change of heart, he alerted Archbishop Lanfranc to the rebel plans.

The Norman warrior bishops would play a key role in the repression of this rebellion, with Odo and Geoffrey de Montbray leading the royal forces. These men were rightly feared and had been accused of committing atrocities during the early stages of the conquest. Bishop Geoffrey, who despised rebels, ordered that any captured rebel should have his right foot cut off as punishment.

Even with 200 Danish ships lending their strength, the rebellion failed and its leaders were imprisoned until William's death. The harshest fate would fall on the earl of Northumbria, who had made the Normans aware of the rebellion. Said to have been a kind, charitable man, he was beheaded in 1076, the only English aristocrat to meet this fate during William's reign.

As William was King of England and Duke of Normandy, he exerted the right to rule over both but did not make a conscious effort to join the two. After his death, they were inherited separately; Normandy went to the eldest son, Robert, while William Rufus was given England.

Part of William's legacy was the creation of an aristocracy that spanned the Channel, holding lands in both England and on the Continent. England and Normandy would officially be joined when Robert sold his holdings to William Rufus in order to fund his expedition to the Holy Land to fight in the First Crusade. England was a power to be reckoned with.

BUILDING THE WHITE TOWER

One of the first things William did when he secured the English crown was build castles throughout the country. As these structures were almost unknown in England before the conquest, they served as bastions that enabled the Normans to project total power. Perhaps the most famous of these constructions is the White Tower, better known as the Tower of London.

When it was first constructed, it only consisted of the Keep. The rest of the structure would follow, with later monarchs adding more and more features. It would have been built from wood at first so it could be constructed quickly. The stone structure began in the 1070s and was wrapped up with William's death in 1087. William of Poitiers records the resistance the Normans encountered while building it: "Certain fortifications were completed in the city against the restlessness of the huge and brutal populace. For he (William) realised that it was of the first importance to overawe the Londoners." Winning over the local population would ensure a stable capital, giving William a power base to push out from and secure the rest of the country. The White Tower was the first step in William's dominance over England and the British Isles.

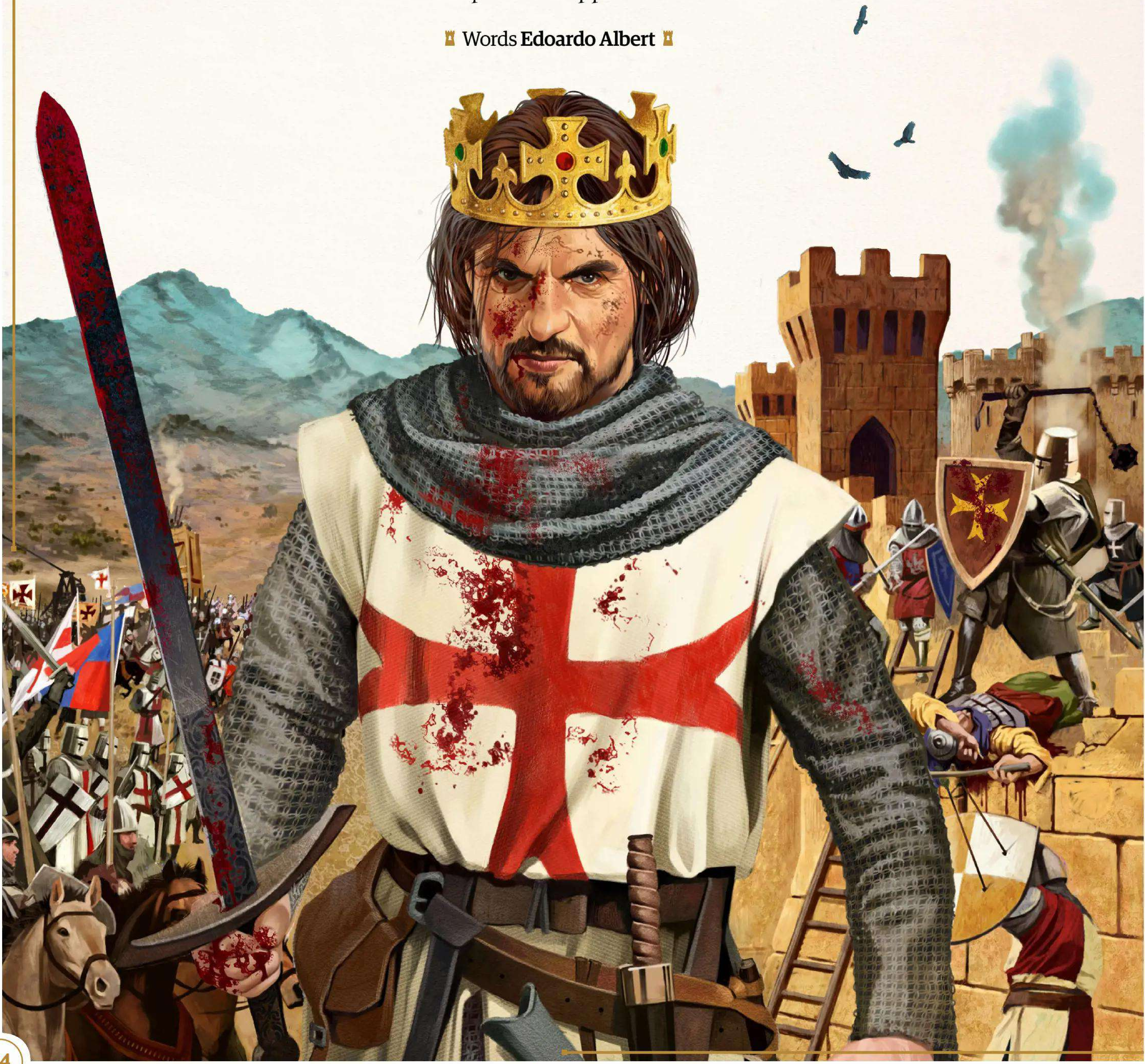
Images Getty Images

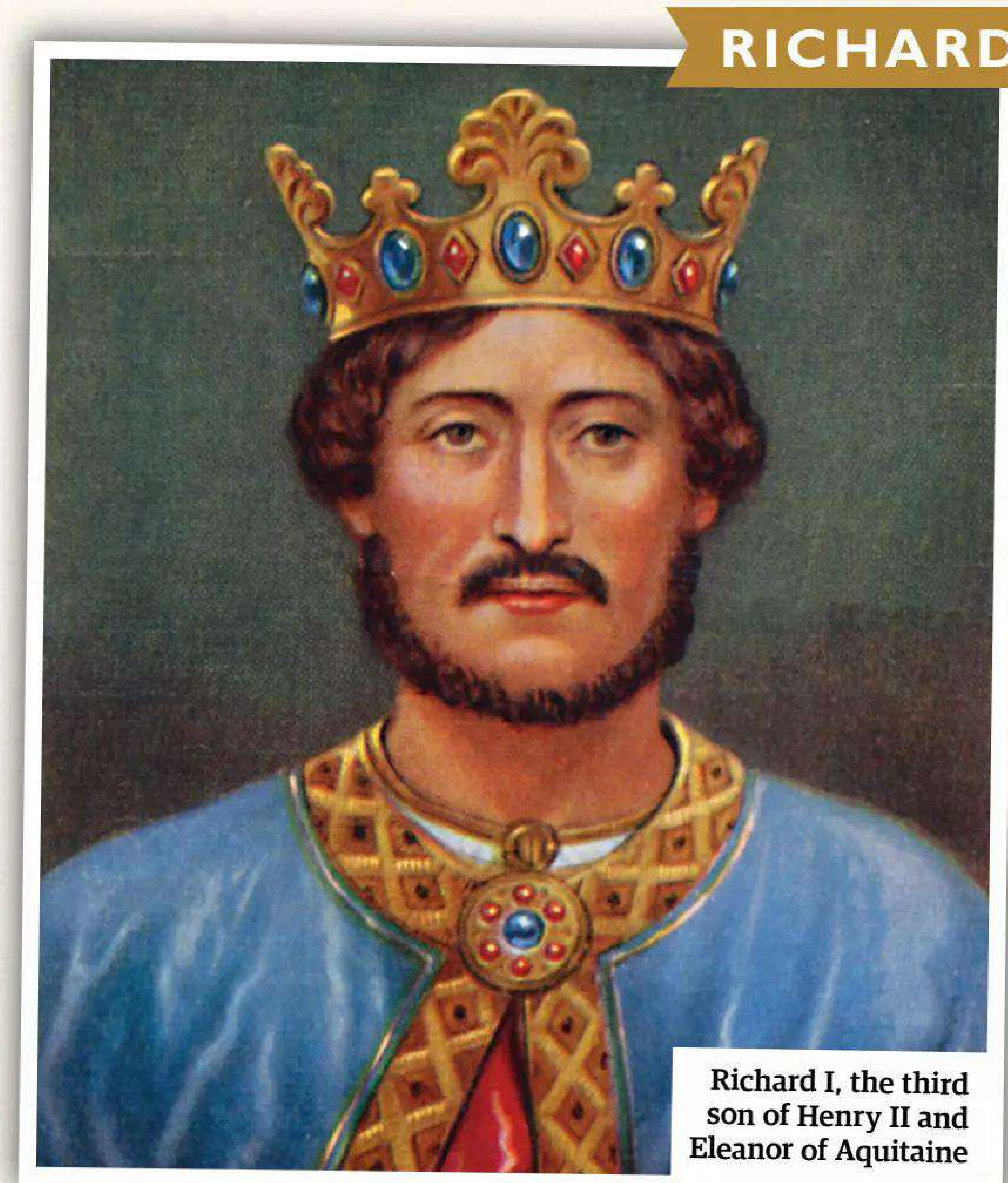
England, 1189-99

RICHARD I

Far from being an absentee king,
Richard lived up to his appellation: Lionheart

Words **Edoardo Albert**





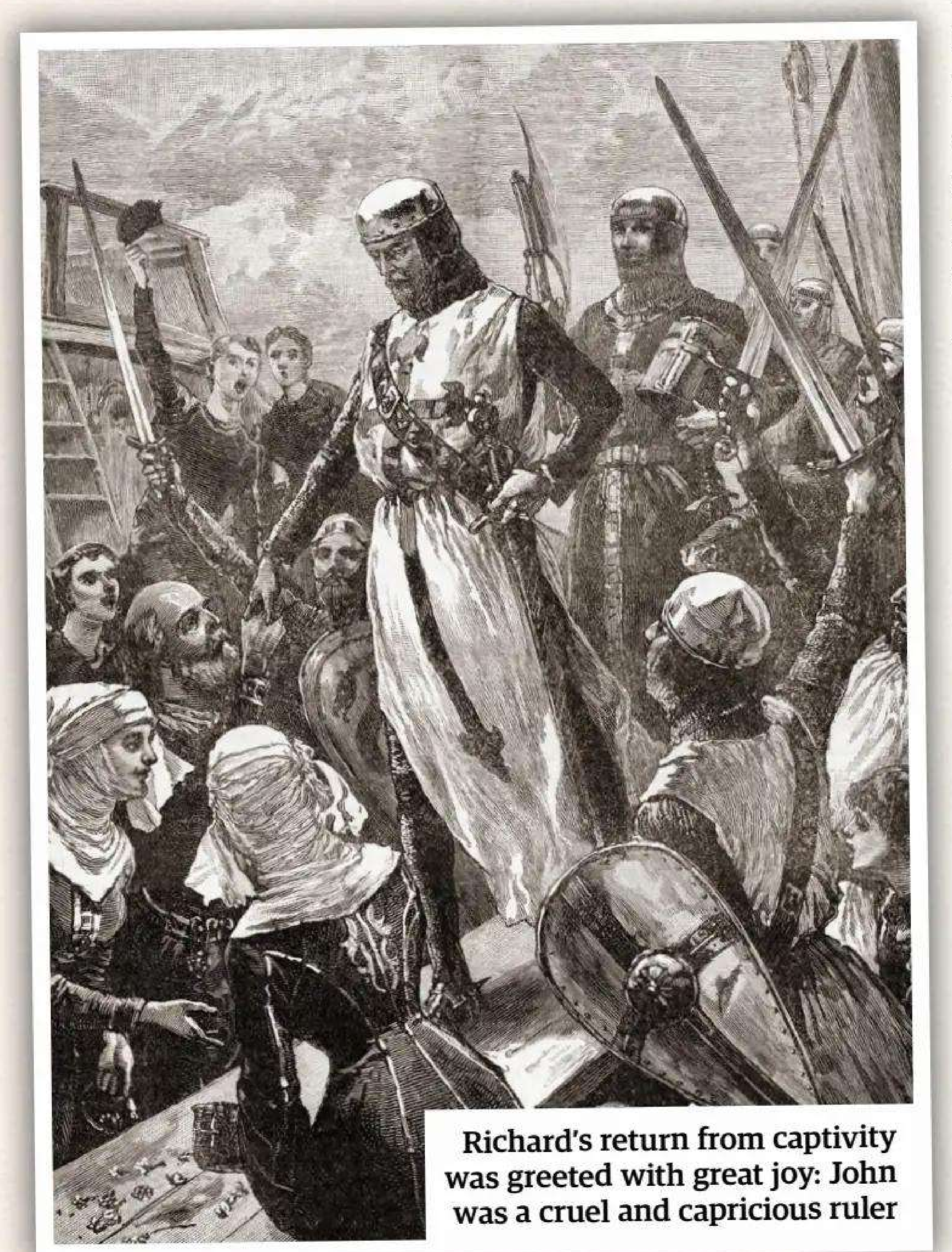
Richard I, the third son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine

The situation was desperate. The Crusader army Richard was leading had been marching along the coast for days through the heat of a Palestinian summer. Having led the conquest of the strategically vital port of Acre, Richard knew that to reconquer Jerusalem he had to first secure the port of Jaffa, south of Acre and the nearest major port to Jerusalem. So Richard marched south from Acre with his army.

From the outset, Saladin's men harassed the marching Crusaders, launching hit-and-run attacks with their quick-moving cavalry riding in close, loosing off volleys of arrows and then withdrawing. The aim was to provoke elements in Richard's army into a rash charge that could then be surrounded and destroyed, gradually whittling away Richard's manpower until a larger assault could finish them off.

But Richard held back his men, maintaining fierce discipline. An accomplished strategist and exemplary tactician, Richard knew that any such failure would be disastrous, and he held his army together, helped by his fleet sailing south alongside them, resupplying the land army as it went. But coming to Arsuf on the coast, the Crusaders entered one of the few wooded areas between Acre and Jaffa. Here, Saladin decided to make his attack. The Knights Hospitaller were the rearguard and it was on them that Saladin concentrated his attack, eventually provoking them into a retaliatory charge.

Richard, seeing what was happening at the rear of his column, realised at once the danger and decided to attack at once. In a series of charges, Richard and his men routed Saladin's army, inflicting a heavy defeat upon the previously invincible Saladin.



Richard's return from captivity was greeted with great joy: John was a cruel and capricious ruler

A year later, on 9 October 1192, Richard took ship from the Holy Land to return to his own considerable possessions: king of England, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, count of Poitiers and Anjou. His leaving was very late in the season for news had reached him that his younger brother, John, was conspiring to wrest his lands from him. Richard left the Holy Land with all the coast in the possession of the Christians and a negotiated truce with Saladin allowing pilgrims to visit Jerusalem. While he had failed to take back the city, he had saved Outremer, the Crusader states in the Holy Land, from imminent collapse.

It was above all for his exploits as a Crusader that Richard attained such renown among his contemporaries; he was known as 'Lionheart' in his own lifetime. But such military prowess, coupled with the tangled claims of the Angevin kings over huge swathes of territory in France, produced many enemies, and none more implacable than Philip II, king of France. Hardly surprising really, since Richard, as duke of Aquitaine and Normandy and count of Anjou and Poitiers, controlled more of France than the king. Unfortunately, Richard had also antagonised Leopold V, Duke of Austria, during the Crusade and in trying to return to his lands, Richard was travelling through Austria with a few companions when he was recognised in Vienna.

Richard's brother John negotiated to keep him imprisoned so he could rule England

The chase lasted three days but eventually Richard was caught and imprisoned. Leopold and his overlord, Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, demanded a huge ransom for Richard's release, while Philip waged a diplomatic campaign to keep Richard in an Austrian gaol. No mere warrior, during his captivity Richard composed one of the most haunting Medieval songs, Ja Nus Hon Pris, a captive's lament at the tardiness of his supposed friends in seeking his freedom. Richard was kept in prison, often in chains, for over a year, only being released on 4 February 1194. Hearing the news, King Philip wrote to Richard's brother, John, "Look to yourself; the devil is loose."

Free once more, Richard set about taking back the lands Philip and John had taken from him. Richard characteristically forgave John for his treachery and named him heir – Richard had spent little time with his wife, Berengaria, and the marriage was childless – but set about reconquering Normandy from Philip. If Richard had lived, it is possible that the Angevin Empire, comprising England and most of France, would have endured. But on 26 March 1199, while besieging a small castle, Richard was hit in the shoulder by a crossbow bolt. Richard had seen a lot of battlefield wounds; when his turned gangrenous, he knew his time was up. The castle having fallen, he asked the crossbowman to be brought to him. He was a boy. Richard forgave him. "Live on, and by my bounty see the light of day." Richard died on 6 April 1199.

Historians have criticised him as the absent king who mortgaged England to fight his wars. By the mores of his day, Richard was generally an exemplary king, though given to temper. He was the greatest warrior king of the Middle Ages. His men loved him; they knew he'd risk his own life on their behalf. During the Crusade, when a foraging party was cut off, Richard went to their aid against the advice of his councillors, saying, "I sent those men there. If they die without me, may I never again be called a king."

Rise of the MONGOLS

How Genghis Khan forged an empire that sought to span the world

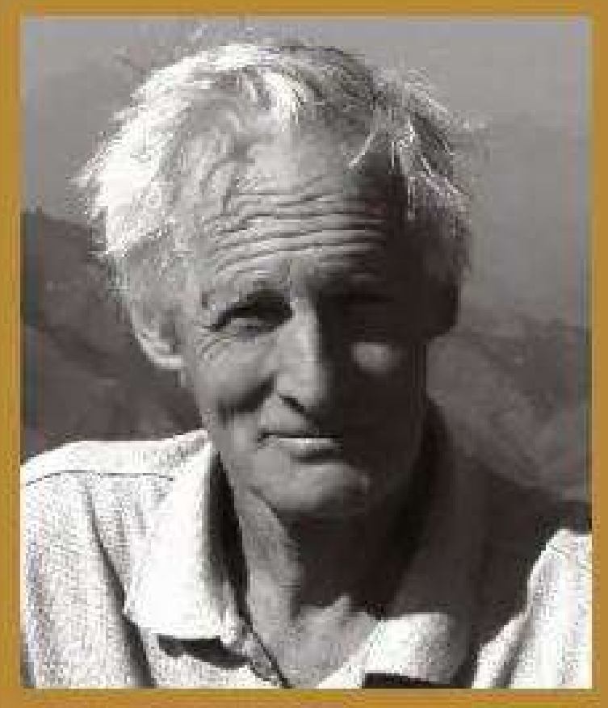
Words **John Man**

The Mongols, under the brilliant, ruthless leadership of Genghis Khan, founded the world's biggest land empire.

So you would assume the Mongols originated in Mongolia. Well, no. Long before Genghis rose to power, they were immigrants, moving west from lands beyond the borders of the nation named after them. Their foundation epic, *The Secret History Of The Mongols*, written soon after Genghis's death, says they came to their current homeland over a, or the, 'Tengis' - meaning a sea or lake - three or four centuries before Genghis was born in 1162. There is a dispute about which body of water the word 'Tengis' refers to, but it is likely to be Lake Hulun, in north-east China.

This is thought to be the case because roughly 1,500 years ago, according to Chinese records, forest people known as Shiwei dominated the forests of the

EXPERT BIO



JOHN MAN

John Man is the author of several books on the Mongol Empire. *Genghis Khan: Life, Death And Resurrection* is a bestseller in 21 languages. He has just translated *The Mongol Khan,* a Mongolian spectacular that opened in London's Coliseum in November 2023.

Illustration Kevin McGivern **Image** John Man

north-east, in present-day Manchuria. They paid tributes in furs to the Turkic empire that ruled Mongolia in the 6th century (long before the Turks started to migrate to Turkey) and to the Tang in China from the 7th to the 9th centuries. They were divided into clans, one of which lived in the Xingan mountains, and was referred to as Meng-wu, the Chinese for Mongol.

Records say they moved west on to the grasslands of northern China, learned the art of working iron, and settled along the river Ergun (in one of several spellings), now part of the frontier between China and Russia. The name of the river suggests this may be true: it probably derives from the Mongol 'ergikh', to wind or twist, which is something the Ergun does a good deal as it meanders northwards for 1,000 kilometres (621 miles), to join the Amur.

Near the little town of Shiwei, its name recalling the long-vanished tribe, is an arch marking the entrance to a park proclaiming itself to be the Origin of the Mongols. Bronze statues represent scenes from the Mongols' later history. Here, according to a local legend, there was a battle between the Mongols and the Turks. The Mongols were reduced to two couples, who fled into an enclosed valley in a range of mountains. Here the Mongols multiplied and lived for four or five centuries.

> *"He knew security, wealth and comfort stemmed from unity under strong leadership"*

There came a time when they desired to escape. The legend relates how they killed 70 oxen and cows, and used the hides to make enormous bellows. With the bellows, they made a huge fire, so powerful that it melted part of the mountain range, making a cleft through which they could escape the hidden valley. They crossed the Tengis and migrated west, to the Khentii mountains of northern Mongolia. Elbowing living space between Turks to the west and Tartars to the east, they settled in their new homeland.

SURVIVING & LEARNING

There, they continued their ways as herders and horse-people, using their iron-working skills to make swords, and also hunting and fighting with their formidable recurved bows. The tribes and clans of herder-warriors feuded constantly with each other, but also developed political skills to bring peace. Allies were vital and often secured by marriages. These were the war-and-peace skills inherited by Genghis's father, Yesugei, and passed on to his son when he was born, probably in 1162. Genghis was not his birth name. Yesugei named the boy Temüjin, after a captured enemy chief. It means 'blacksmith', from the Mongol 'temur', iron, a reminder of the importance of iron in nomadic culture.

Young Temüjin's world was more than just a collection of feuding groups. What is now China was divided into three empires - Jin in the north-east, Western Xia in today's Xinjiang, and in the far south lay Song. Jin, with present-day Beijing as its capital, was the Mongols' traditional enemy, but its walled cities made it a tough nut to crack for raiders.

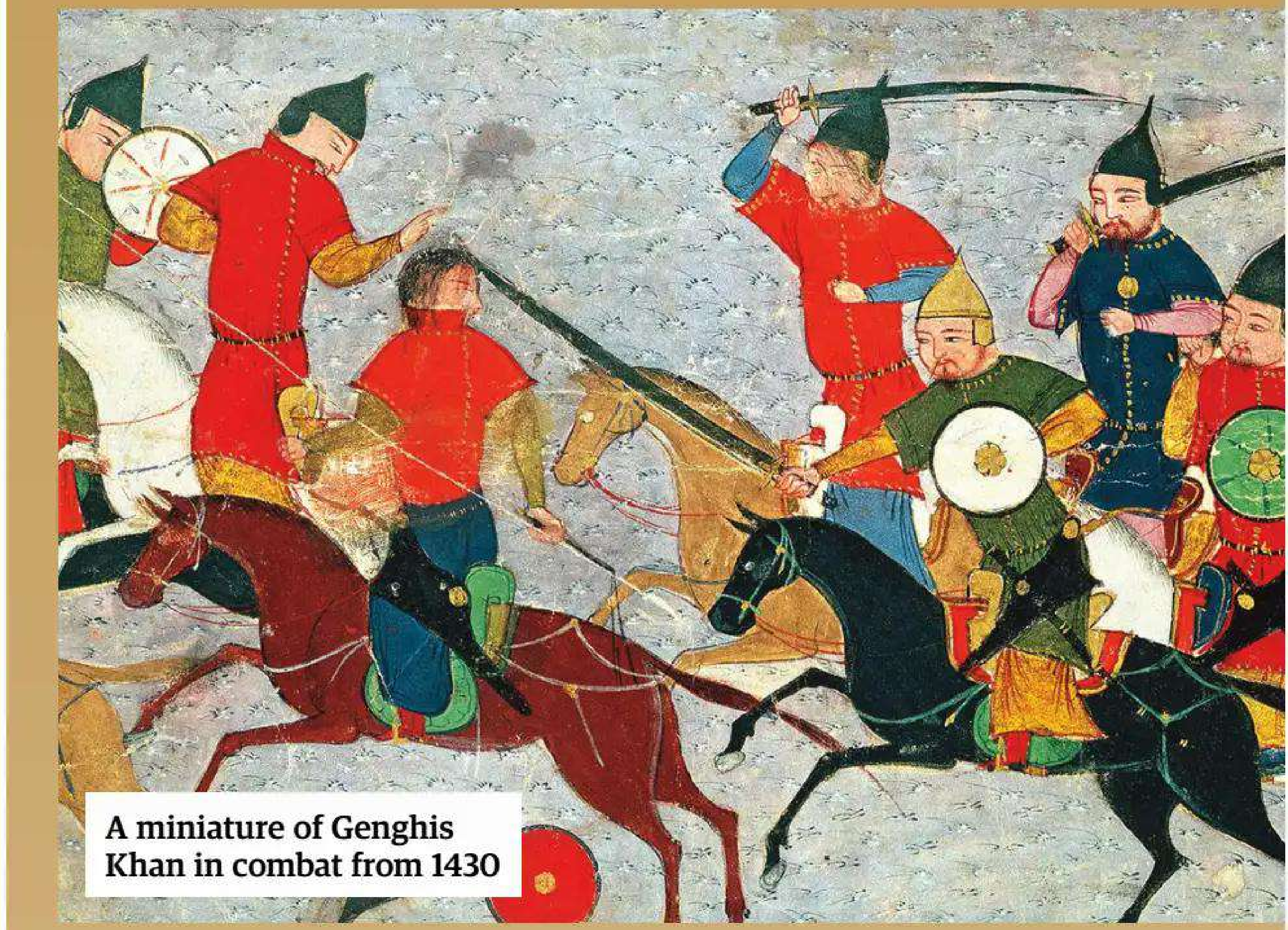
Temüjin's father, the leader of his clan, was murdered and his mother, Hoelun, was rejected by the new leader, in the expectation that she and her children would die. But Hoelun was a survivor, digging up wild onions to feed her growing family. She instilled into young Temüjin other survival skills, such as the need for unity and loyalty. *The Secret History* records that when Temüjin shot and killed his teenage half-brother after a trivial argument, Hoelun laid into him in a fearful rage. He never forgot. A prime feature of his character was respect for his mother and the other women in his life.

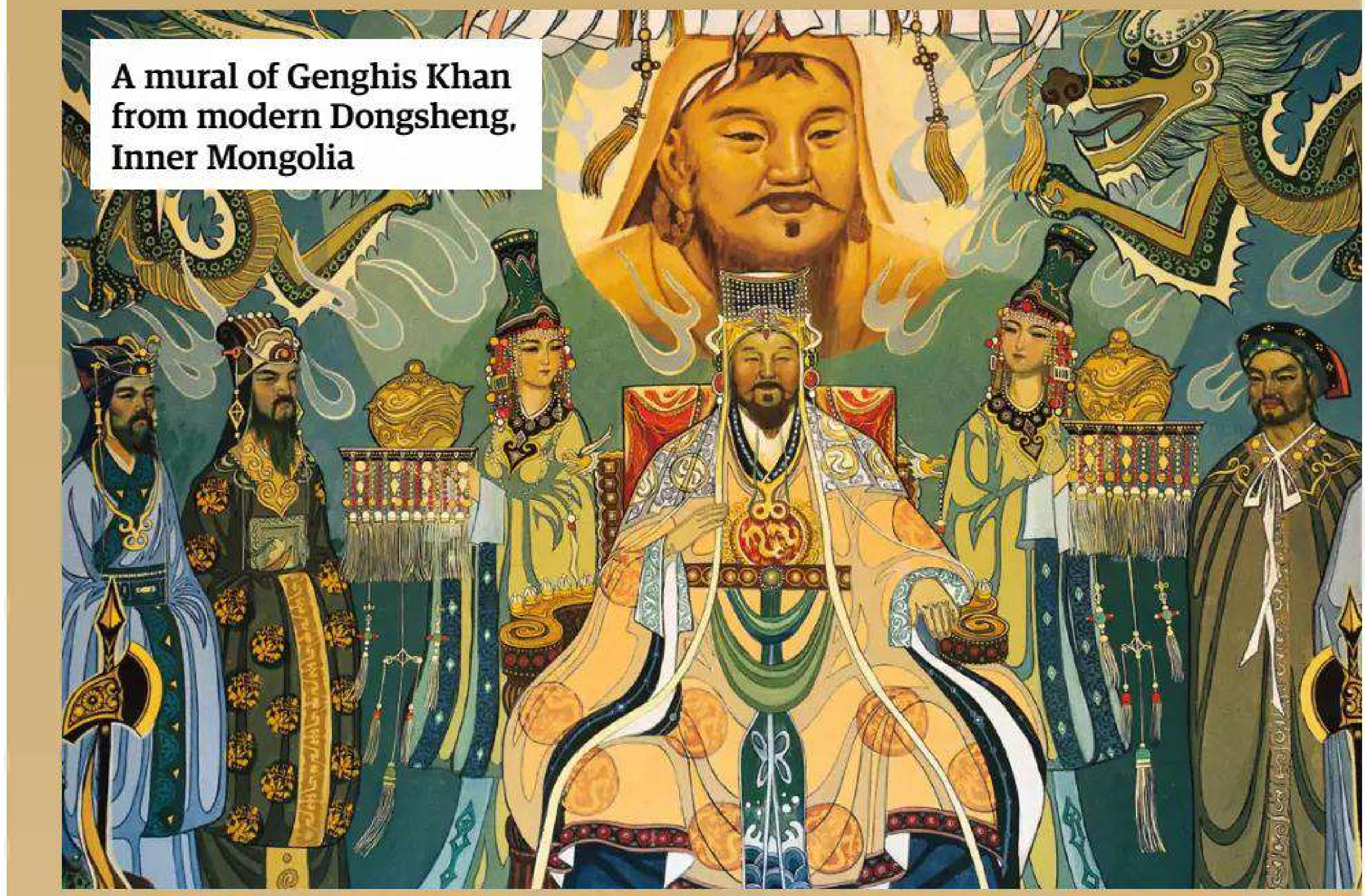
So, he knew what lack of unity led to - poverty, suffering and death - and also the opposite. Security, wealth and comfort stemmed from unity under strong leadership.

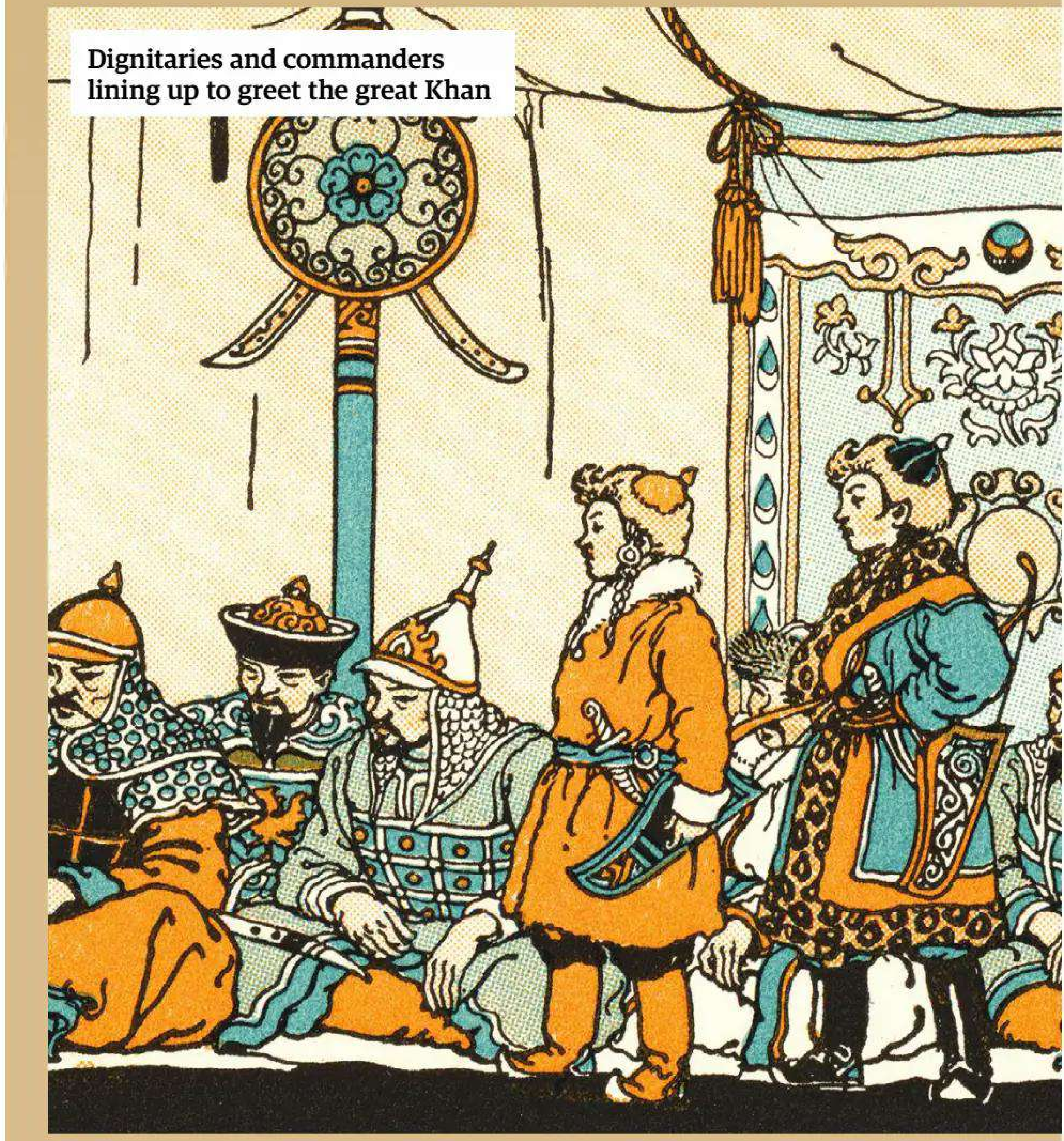
LOOKING SOUTH

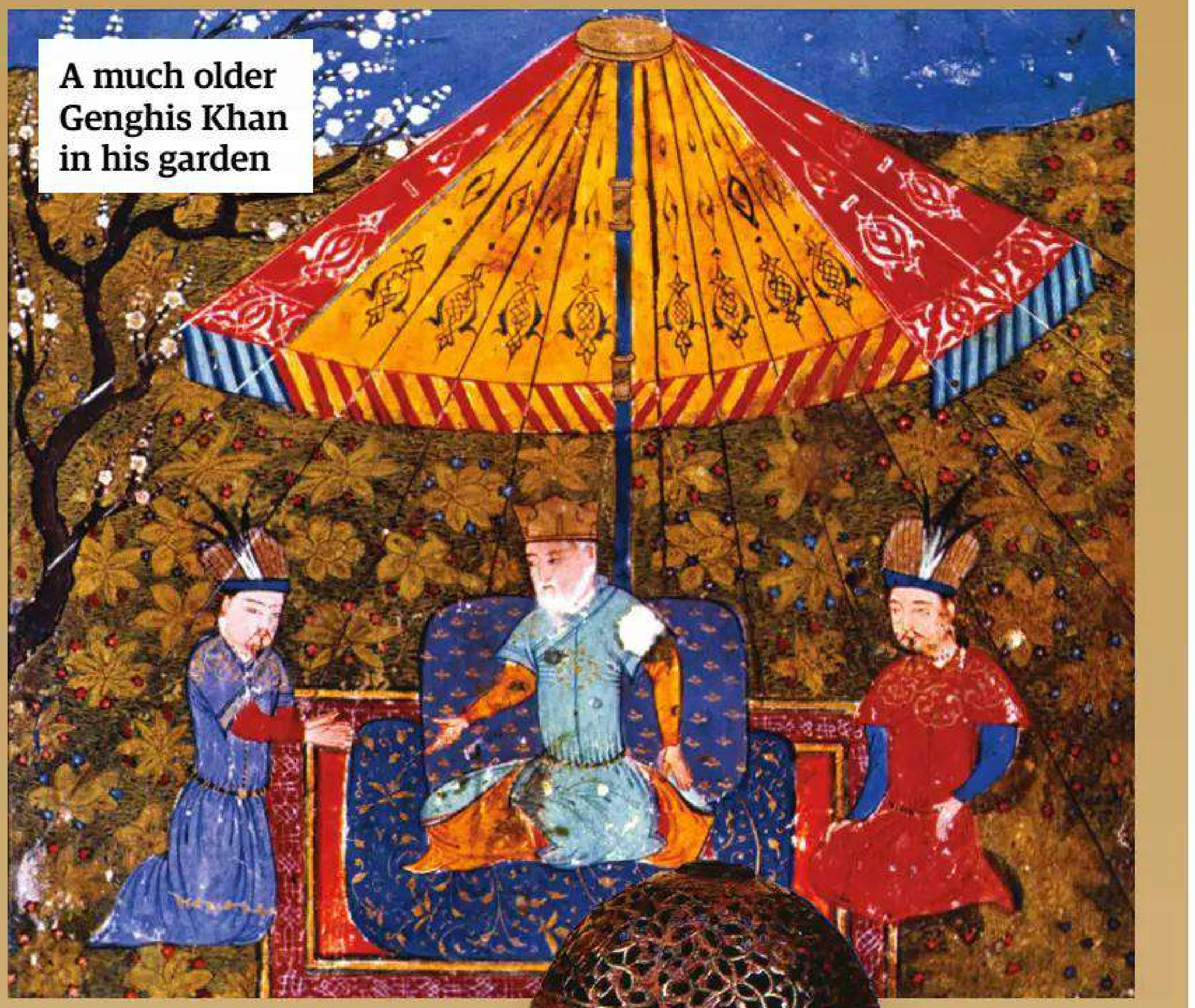
With these aims, Temüjin turned out to be a genius at steppe politics. It took him 20 years to unite Mongolia's clans and tribes. In 1206, as khan, he was granted his unique title of Genghis (its much-disputed meaning was probably an obsolete Turkic term for 'fierce').

What now? In a culture that lacked currency, he needed booty to keep his


A miniature of Genghis Khan in combat from 1430

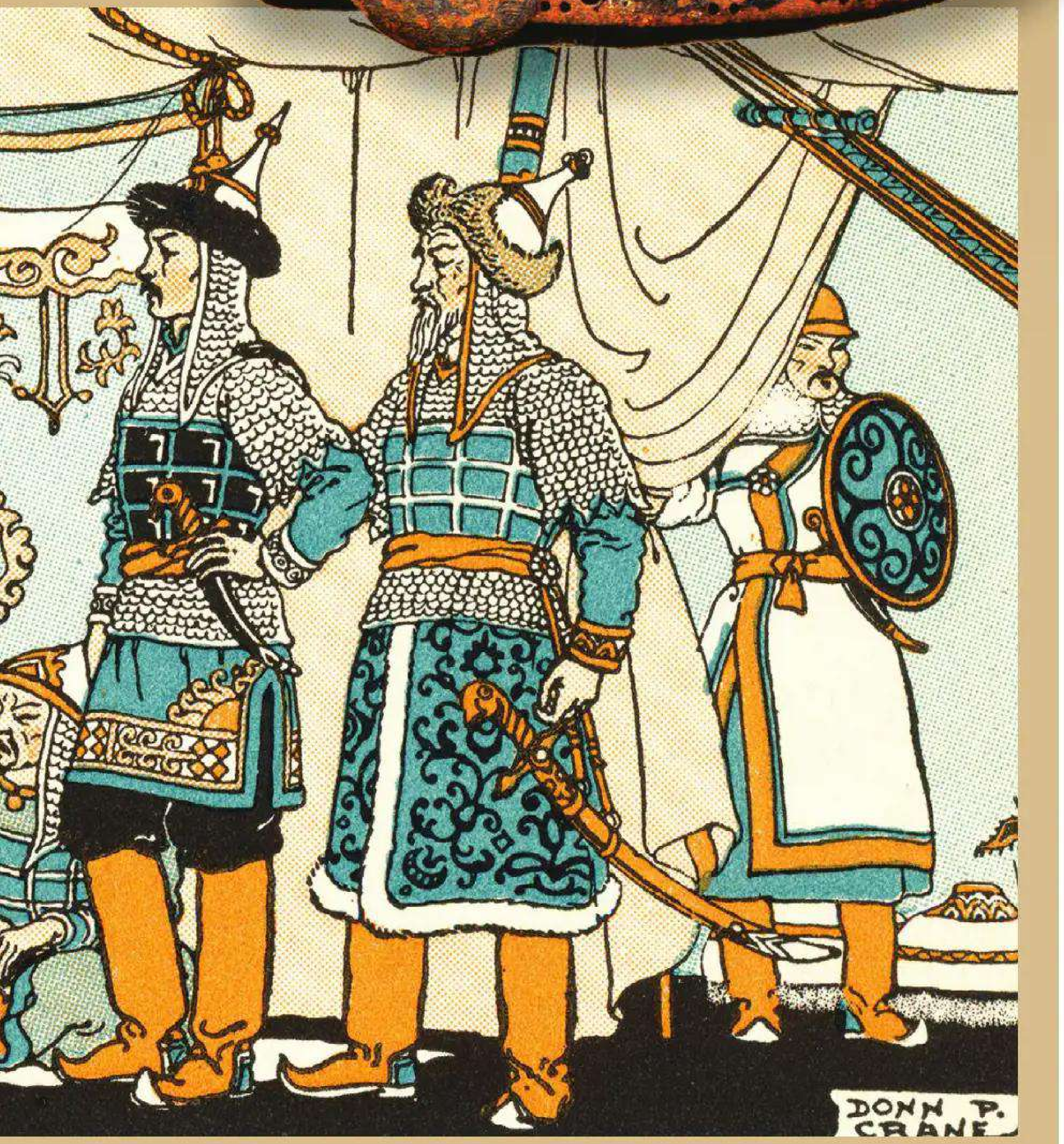

A mural of Genghis Khan from modern Dongsheng, Inner Mongolia


Dignitaries and commanders lining up to greet the great Khan



A much older Genghis Khan in his garden

A Mongol helmet taken by the Japanese some time between 1274 and 1281



followers happy. There were obvious sources. His first capital, Avraga, a place of a few stone buildings, a temple and a palace-tent, backed onto the Khentii mountains but was also the gateway to the gravel plains of the Gobi and the rich lands of Jin and Western Xia.

Ghengis now began to show other aspects of his genius. Eventually the founder of his nation and of the world's greatest land empire, he killed millions of people but he was much more than a mass murderer. In terms of leadership, he was a phenomenon, starting from almost nothing, rising to lead clan, federation, nation and empire, with consequences reaching down the centuries to affect today's China, and thus the world. Knowing he needed more than an old-fashioned tribal chiefdom, he rose to a new level of leadership at each stage of his career. Conquest was not enough, he needed proper government, taxation, records, and bureaucrats. To this end, he employed talent wherever he found it.

> *"He was much more than a mass murderer. In terms of leadership, he was a phenomenon"*

Perhaps his most astonishing insight was to see that no large-scale government was possible without writing. Chinese script has many fine qualities, but with thousands of signs it is complicated. Genghis, an illiterate nomad, imported a simpler script from one of his new subjects, the highly literate Uighurs. That's the script you see today, with a few changes, decorating Mongolian bank notes. It is still in everyday use in Inner Mongolia, now part of China.

Jin was Genghis's prime target, but with many well-fortified cities, it was allied with Western Xia. So Genghis's first foreign adventure was to invade Western Xia. While he succeeded, he did not fully ensure its compliance, with consequences for later events. His flanks temporarily secure, he forged across the Gobi to attack Jin. That meant taking out several fortresses on the way and confronting Beijing, with its impregnable walls. A brutal year-long siege starved the city into surrender in 1215. That success gave him more troops and powerful new weapons like explosives, siege bows, catapults and battering rams. Other cities capitulated and his army became a snowball, gathering pace with every city taken. Much of north China fell to him, and the rest would have followed, but for a surprising development.

ISLAMIC INVASION

In 1218, seeking peaceful expansion or perhaps information, he despatched a trade delegation of 100 or so westwards to the Islamic kingdom of Khwarezm – present-day Iran, plus a good chunk of the -stans – with its Silk Road emporia like Samarkand and Bukhara. The governor of the border town, Otrar, saw the delegation as a nest of spies and killed them all. When Genghis sent three envoys to talk, the governor killed those as well.

Offended, Genghis put off the conquest of Jin and turned on the west. Before he set out, his favourite wife, Yisui, demanded he nominate an heir, and he named his third son Ögedei – another sign of good leadership that many autocrats have ignored. Needing all the help he could get, he demanded troops from Western Xia, but was refused.

The invasion of the Islamic world was a bloody campaign without precedent. Otrar, Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv and other cities fell, with perhaps two million deaths. The Mongols were expert executioners, but this was not indiscriminate slaughter. Siege warfare is slow and expensive, and it destroys what you want to possess. Genghis's strategy was to destroy a city only if it resisted, sending a message down the line that resistance was useless. 'Urbicide' – the killing of cities – proved brutally effective. Many cities gave up without a struggle. His aim was to take slaves, artisans, women and treasure, but leave most cities intact to produce and trade under Mongol governors.

There was no ideological or religious element to this destruction. The Mongols were animists who revered the Blue Sky, the top deity in a universe of spirits, whose will could be divined by shamans. But they were happy for their subjects to follow their own beliefs. Gibbon, in his *Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, suggested that Genghis and his Mongols were tolerant of different religions.

Images Alamy, Getty Images

But Genghis was no precedent of the Enlightenment. His sole demand was that new subjects serve their new masters. As for their religion, he just didn't care.

The flip side of this agenda was that the Mongols brought with them virtually nothing in terms of culture. They had no art, philosophy or literature (yet) that would enrich their subject cultures. True, their influence was immense - leaving aside the destruction, they brought together east and west as never before, with immense implications for trade and exploration (Columbus was aiming for China when he sailed westward in 1492). But the Mongols were at best facilitators, not a force for creativity.

THE KEY TO CONQUEST

Ghengis's conquests remain among the most astonishing in world history. How could an army of nomads achieve such success? Horses and the recurved bow are part of the answer. Genghis's leadership is another. But these elements worked only because of geography. Every army needs supplies - food, fuel, weaponry. Overlong supply lines spell disaster. But the Mongols had all the supplies they needed in the form of grass. The grasslands of Asia run from Mongolia to Hungary. As long as the Mongol cavalry had grass, the warriors had transport, meat and drink, even the fermented mares' milk, or koumiss, which is the standard refreshment in the Mongolian countryside today. There was nothing to stop them until the grass ran out, short of the Mediterranean.

> "A nasty civil war ended with Genghis's remarkable daughter-in-law, Sorkaktani, hijacking power for her sons"

The Mongols went on to seize much of today's Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan. A 7,000-kilometre (4,350-mile) gallop around the Caspian provided information about Russia that would come in useful later. Meanwhile, an advance through the North-West Frontier into India told Genghis that India would be too great a challenge. In 1225, he returned home to resume the conquest of Western Xia and northern China.

But on this campaign, in the August of 1227, with Western Xia conquered, and with his army poised to invade the Chinese heartland, he fell sick, probably of typhoid, which was ravaging his army. A week later - most likely in a valley that is now part of the Liupan Shan National Forest Park in Ningxia - he died. The campaign came to a sudden halt. His body was rushed back to his homeland in the Khentii mountains of northern Mongolia for burial in a secret grave, the discovery of which would be one of the greatest archaeological finds.

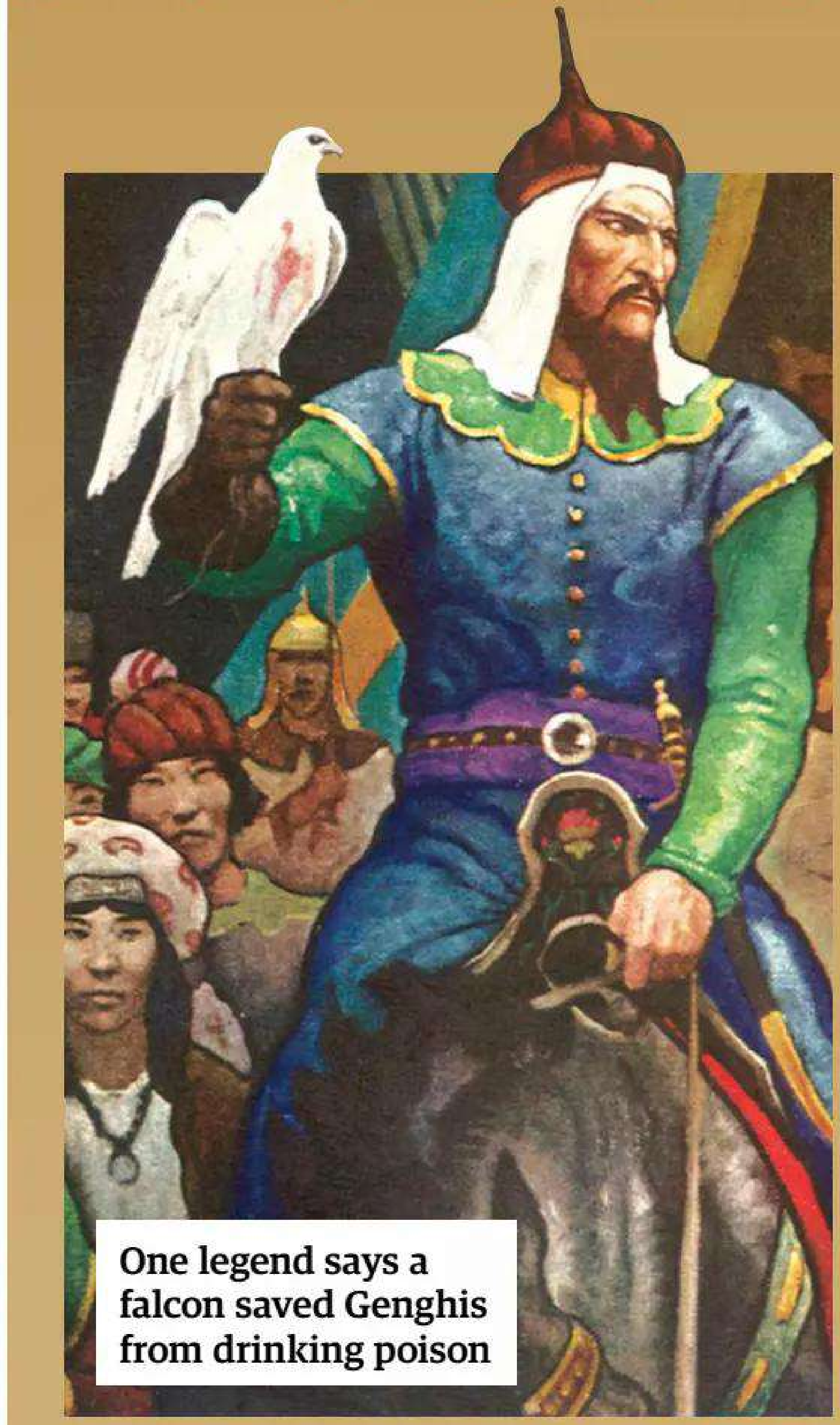
MORE EXPANSION

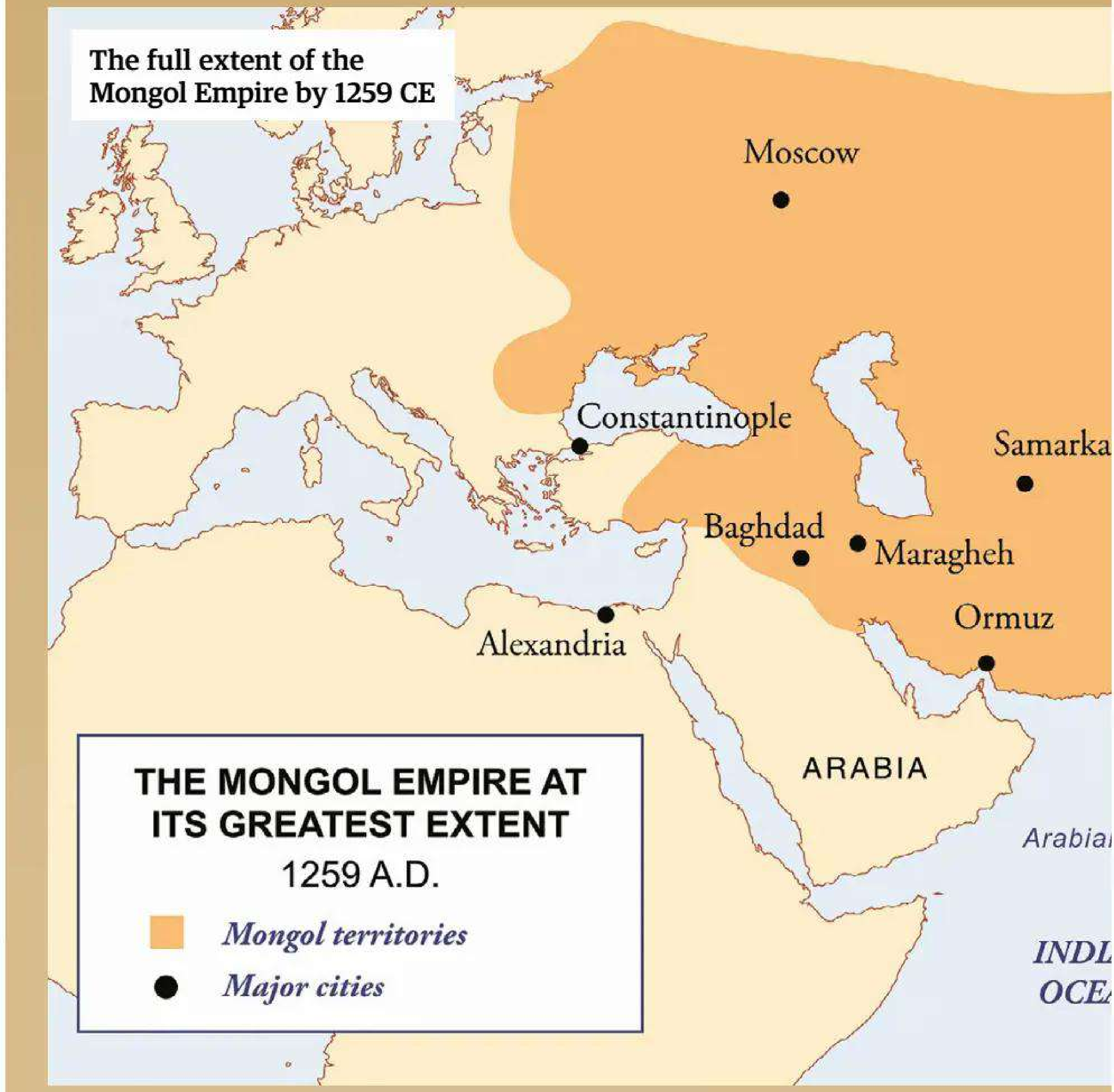
Genghis's heir, Ögedei, assumed the task of conquest, and took another great step forward. To date, the Mongols had been on one vast looting expedition, with unprecedented results. Success demanded an explanation, conquest needed a proper justification - in short, an ideology.

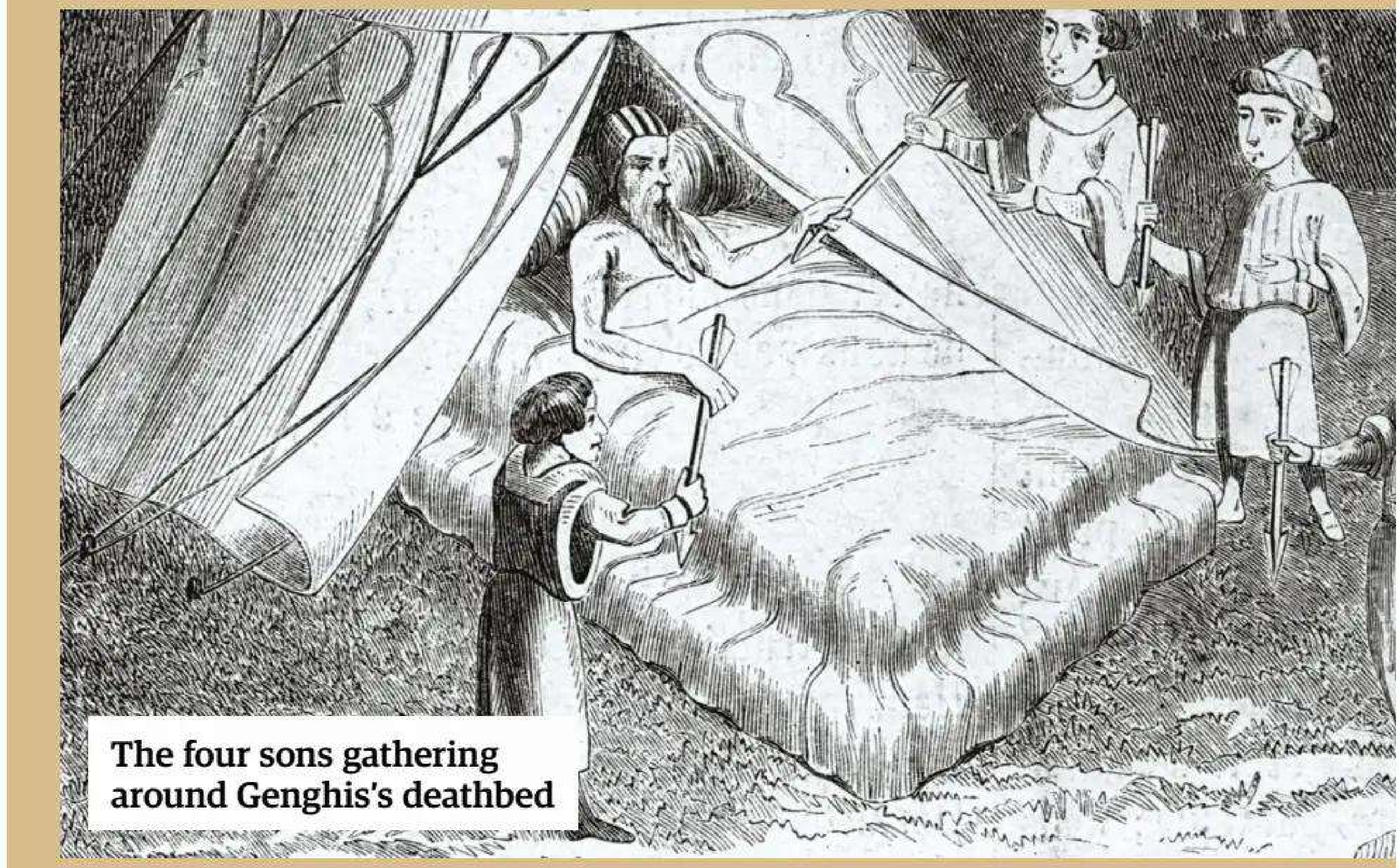
It ran like this: God - in the form of the Mongol sky-deity the Blue Sky - was on the side of the Mongols. Their success proved it. What limits might Heaven set? Apparently none. The conclusion was clear: the whole world had been given to the Mongols, and it was their divine duty to make all nations acknowledge this fact. With hindsight, they were doomed to fail. But we should remember nobody knew of the world's true size and complexity.

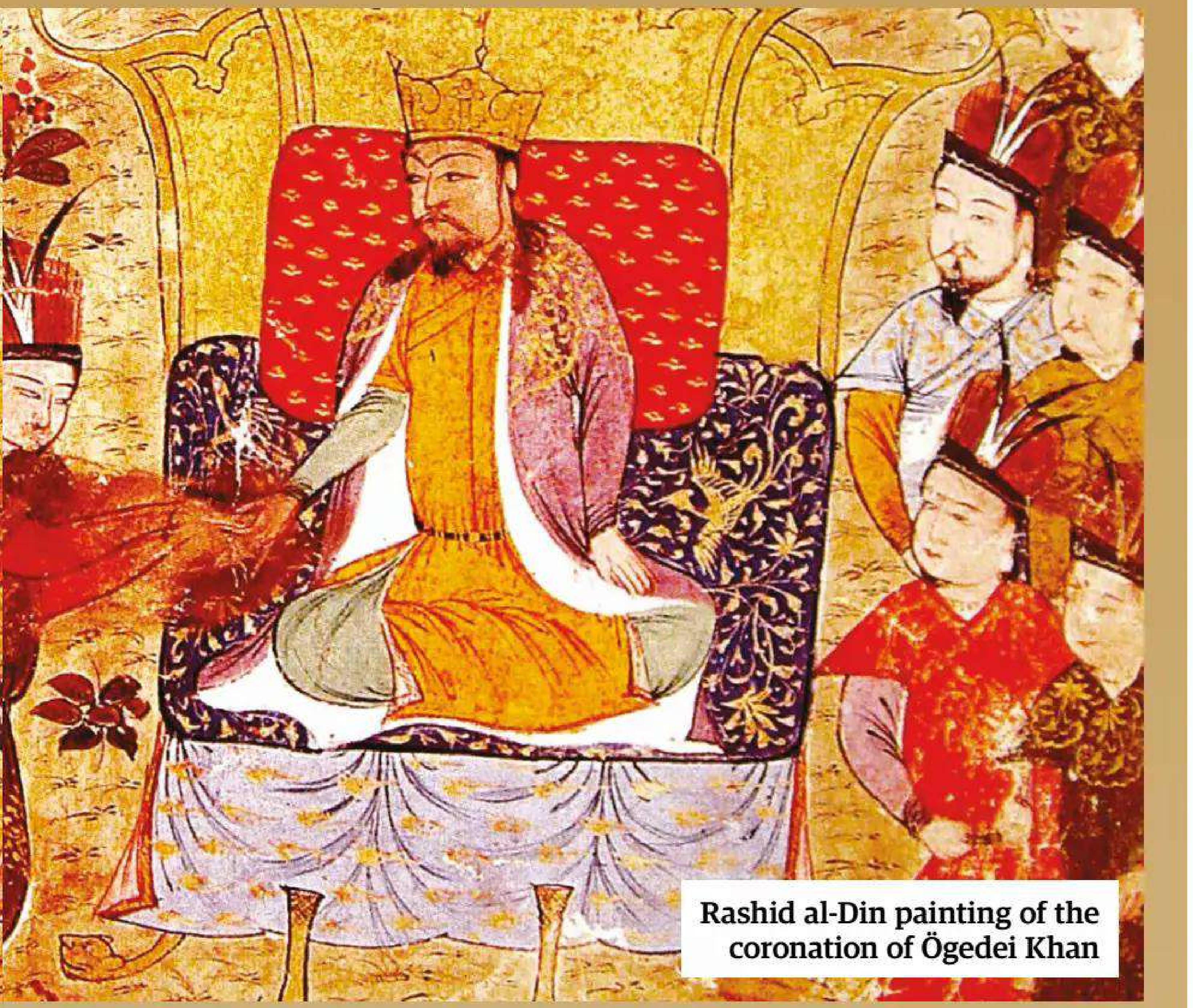
So on they went. A nasty civil war ended with Genghis's remarkable daughter-in-law, Sorkaktani, hijacking power for her sons. One (Hulegu) took over Persia, another (Möngke) ruled Mongolia and the third (Kublai) took power in China. Expansion continued, into southern Russia (where descendants were still in place in the 19th century), to Poland, Hungary and the outskirts of Vienna, to the fringes of Egypt, and across the rest of northern China. In 1260, Kublai, master of northern China, became Great Khan, the nominal ruler of a land empire already the largest in world history, and driven by the vision of world rule.

His first task was to establish himself, both by political choices and military ones. He did this by building his first

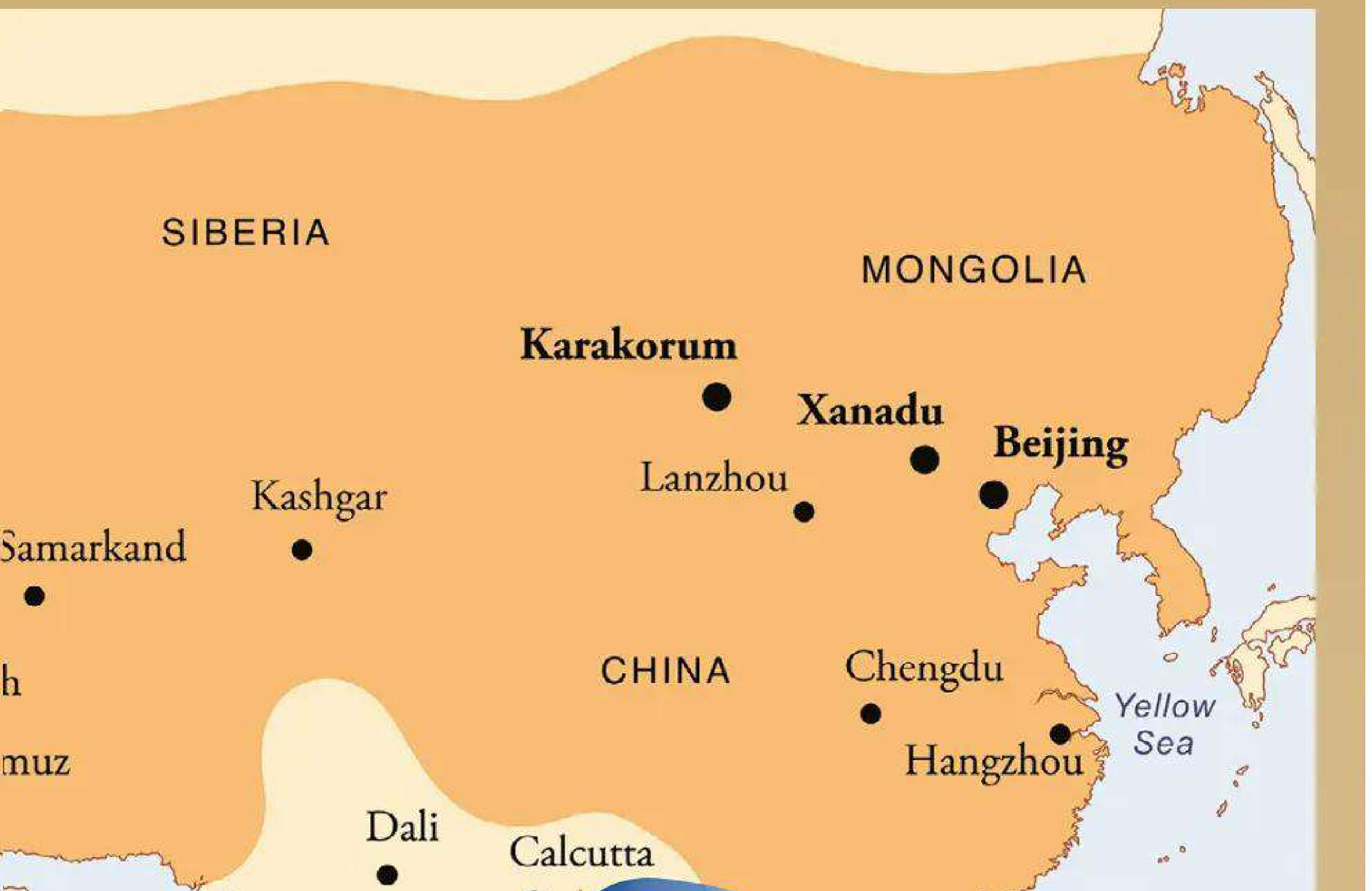

One legend says a falcon saved Genghis from drinking poison

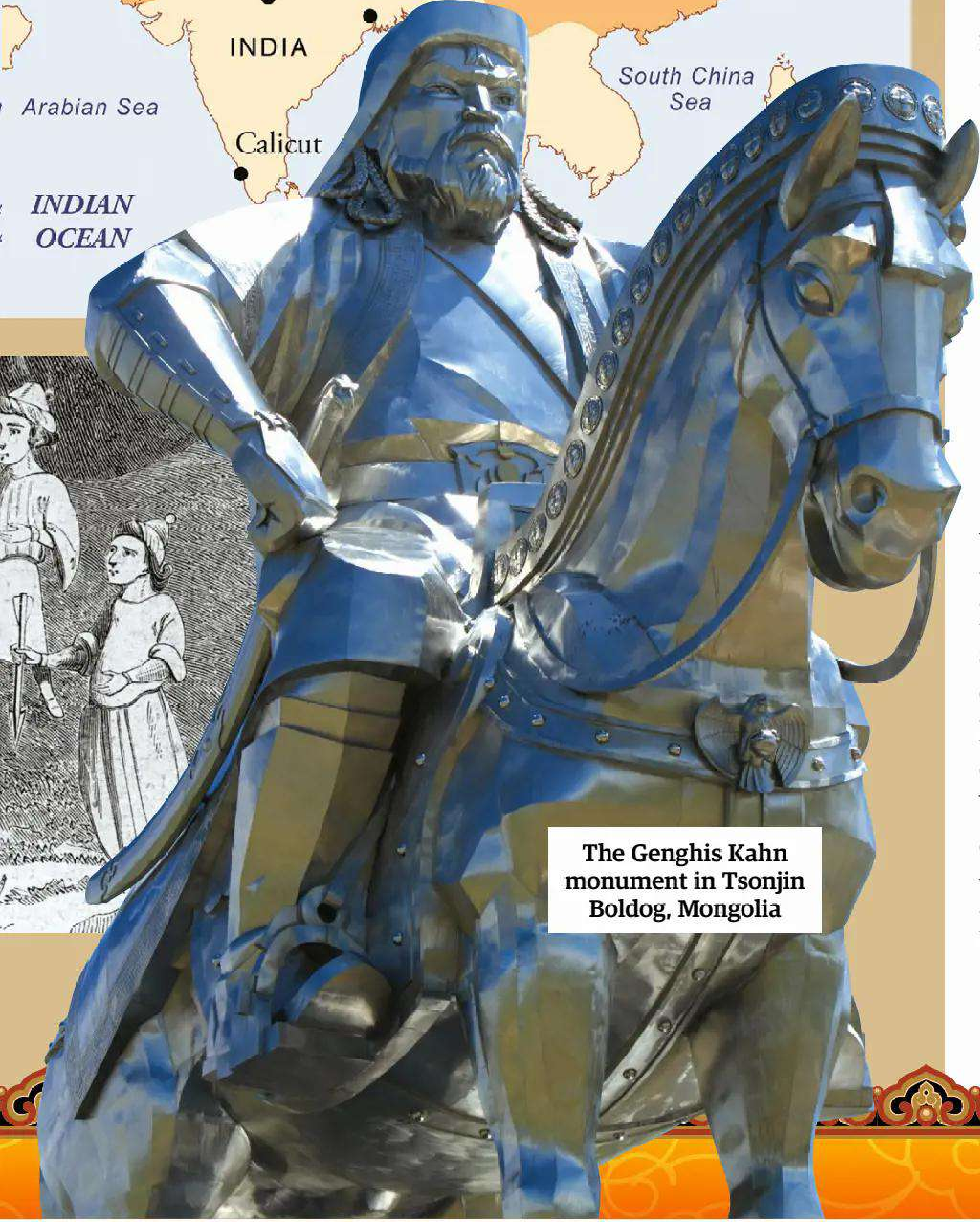

The full extent of the Mongol Empire by 1259 CE


The four sons gathering around Genghis's deathbed



Rashid al-Din painting of the coronation of Ögedei Khan





The Genghis Kahn monument in Tsonjin Boldog, Mongolia

capital Xanadu, as it is in English - Shang Du, 'Upper Capital' as it is in Chinese, as opposed to Da Du, 'Great Capital', as Beijing was known. But he could not hope to rule all China, let alone the world, from the grasslands. He settled in a rebuilt Beijing and extended his ideology by turning Buddhist, to ensure that Tibet remained under Mongol control and also so he could claim the Buddhist title of Universal Ruler. Then came the conquest of the rest of China, not with nomadic cavalry but a Chinese river-borne navy and an army of siege weapons. A vast advance southward ended in 1279, in a naval battle in the far south, when the top Chinese adviser took hold of the young heir to the Song throne and leapt into the sea with him.

At this point, Kublai came up against reality. Four invasions - Vietnam, Java and Japan (twice) - all ended in disaster. The 1281 armada against Japan failed when a typhoon destroyed his 4,000 ships - the greatest sea-borne invasion until D-Day and the greatest naval disaster ever.

AN ENDURING LEGACY

But those disasters still left an astonishing legacy. It is impossible to tell the history of a score of nations across Eurasia and the Far East without mentioning the Mongols. But the greatest consequence is China pretty much as we know it today. The Mongol Empire itself fell apart, as Genghis's squabbling heirs went their own ways, but Kublai had made himself a Chinese emperor, with a Chinese dynasty, the Yuan. His realm united all of China, including Mongolia, from the rich belly of the east to the mountains and deserts of the west and the northern grasslands. The Mongols were thrown out of China in 1368, but no later dynasty reversed Kublai's acquisitions. That is why Yunnan, Tibet and the Western Regions of Xinjiang are ruled from Beijing today.

True, Mongolia itself broke away from China in the early 20th century when China was weak. Many Chinese today see all of Mongolia - not just Inner Mongolia, which has been in the Chinese sphere for well over a century - as a part of greater China, as it had been under Kublai, who was, after all, a Chinese emperor. And to many Chinese, it would be the restoration of the natural order of things if all of Mongolia and China were reunited, and the empire started by Kublai's grandfather partially restored.

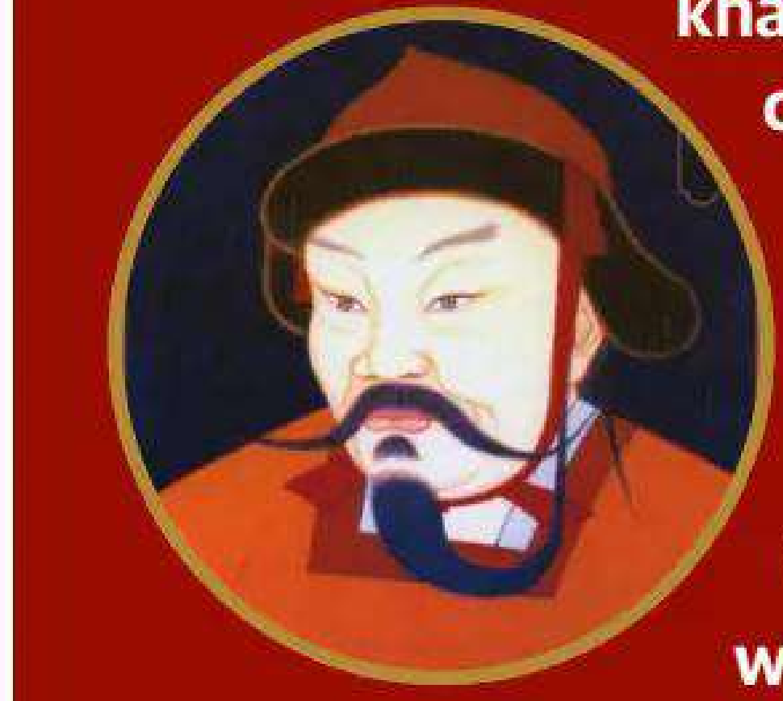
THE NEXT KHANS

The successors to Genghis's empire

ÖGEDEI KHAN

1185-1241

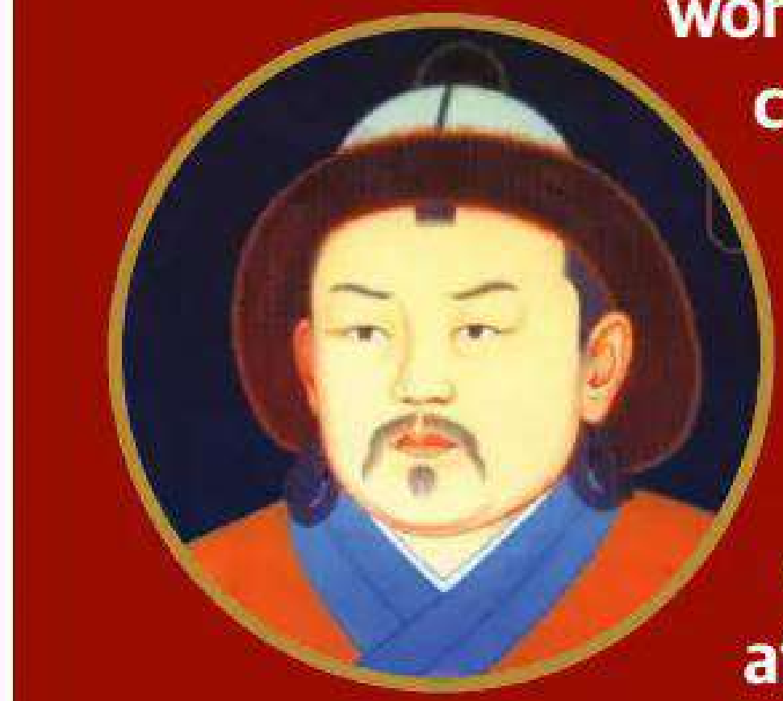
The third son of Genghis Khan, Ögedei inherited a mighty empire, but looked to expand it even further. He came to the throne in 1229 after his father's death and took the title khagan (meaning 'great khan'). He trusted his commanders to orchestrate wars on multiple fronts, but he looked to preserve defeated regions to make use of their wealth and skills.



GÜYÜK KHAN

1206-1248

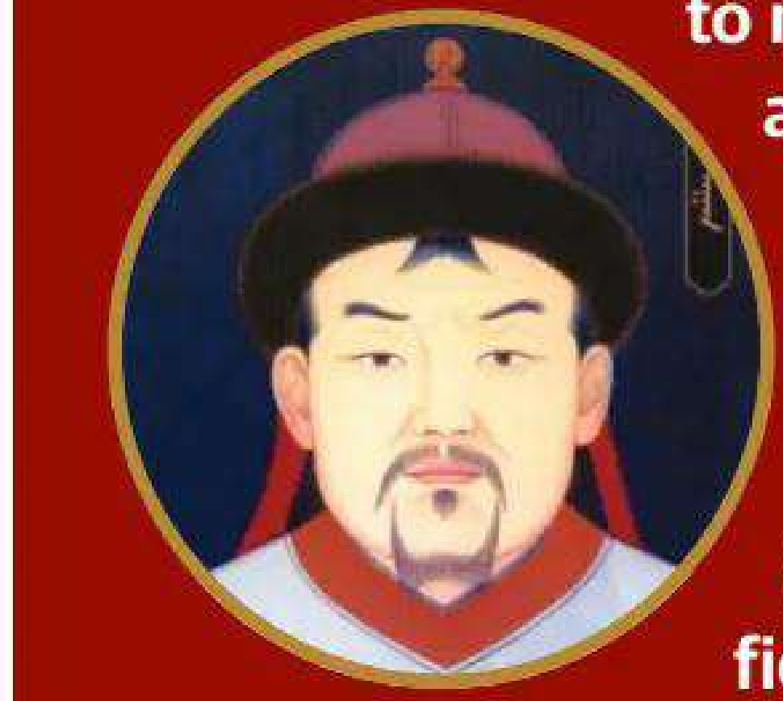
Grandson to Genghis Khan and eldest son of Ögedei, Güyük was elected to the throne in 1246 following a regency period led by his mother Töregene. His time in charge may have proven contentious, having won out against his cousin Batu who had conquered Russia for the empire, and his interest in Christianity, but he died very shortly after taking charge.



MÖNGKE KHAN

1208-1259

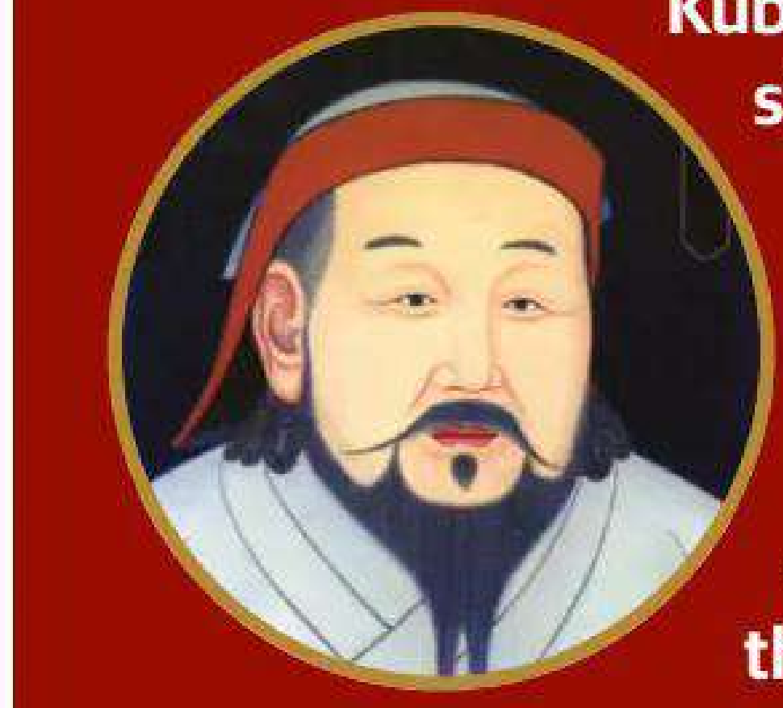
Ascending the throne in 1251, Möngke continued to expand the Mongol Empire and as a result was the last Khan able to rule it directly, as those who followed would need to allocate regional leaders to maintain order. His armies crushed the last resistance in Iran, Iraq and Syria, eventually bringing his realm to the Mediterranean Sea. He died in the field, fighting in China.



KUBLAI KHAN

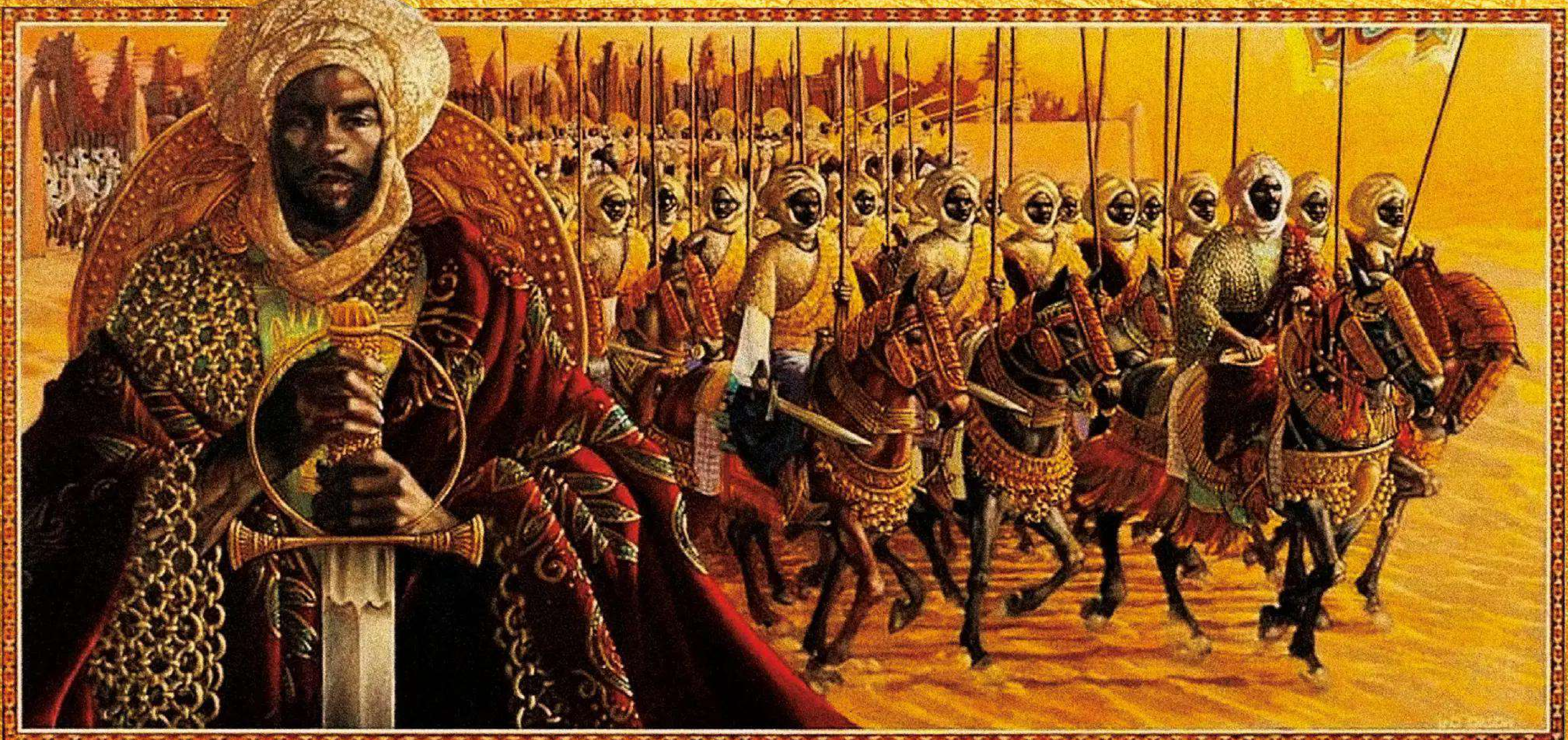
1215-1294

The brother of Möngke, Kublai had been a general in his army, looking after the empire's interests in the east. He completed the conquest of China and built on the growing wealth and splendour of the empire. Kublai demonstrated a rare statecraft in managing China in particular, but also the Golden Horde in Russia, Il-Khanate in Persia and steppe nomads, each with their own approaches.



Images Alamy, Getty Images

MANSA MUSA
THE RICHEST



MAN IN HISTORY

The Emperor of Mali was the wealthiest man on the planet – but you've probably never heard of him

Words **Jem Duducu**

If you wanted to describe someone as wealthy, you might say that they are as 'rich as Crassus' or call them 'a Rockefeller'. However, while Ancient Roman businessman Marcus Licinius Crassus and American oil baron John D Rockefeller have become bywords for extravagant wealth, their respective fortunes were paltry compared to Mansa Musa, the 14th-century emperor of Mali.

The Mali Empire (which in the West African Manding languages is known as Manden Kurufaba) was founded in the early 1200s and lasted into the late 1600s. It started in Niani, a town in the very east of modern-day Guinea, located on the banks of the River Niger. In the early part of the first millennium, the West African Ghanian Empire declined to the point where territories on its fringes felt emboldened to make a move for independence.

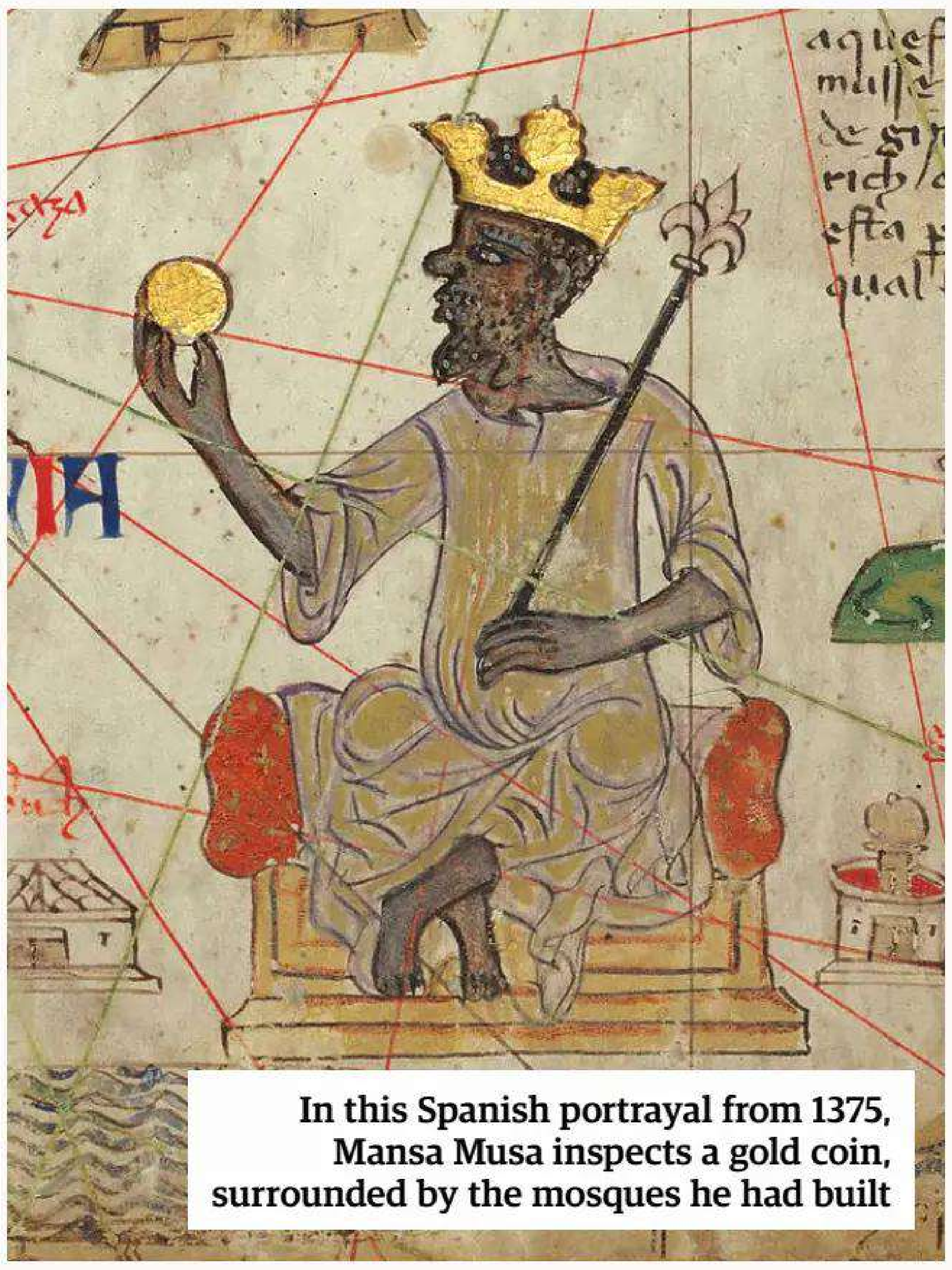
This was, of course, to the detriment of the old regime. At the same time, trade routes started to change in favour of the region around Niani which had been a Muslim region for centuries. It was positioned at the end of a vast trade network, which spread from Spain to Persia and whose epicentre was the Persian capital of Baghdad. Another important place was Cairo, the seat of the Muslim Caliph, as well as the economic centre of Egypt.

Trade plus growing territories enabled a new dynasty of rulers to emerge. The first of these was Sundiata Keita, also known as the Lion of Mali, who ruled from roughly 1235-1255 as 'Mansa'. This is a local word for emperor.

The mansas increased their influence and power in the traditional way by conquering new territories, but they were successful in other ways as well. Mansa Uli, Sundiata Keita's son, increased agricultural productivity in the empire. Others ensured that the city of Timbuktu had a first class university, attracting scholars from all over the Islamic world, who came to share their ideas in the fields of mathematics and astronomy.

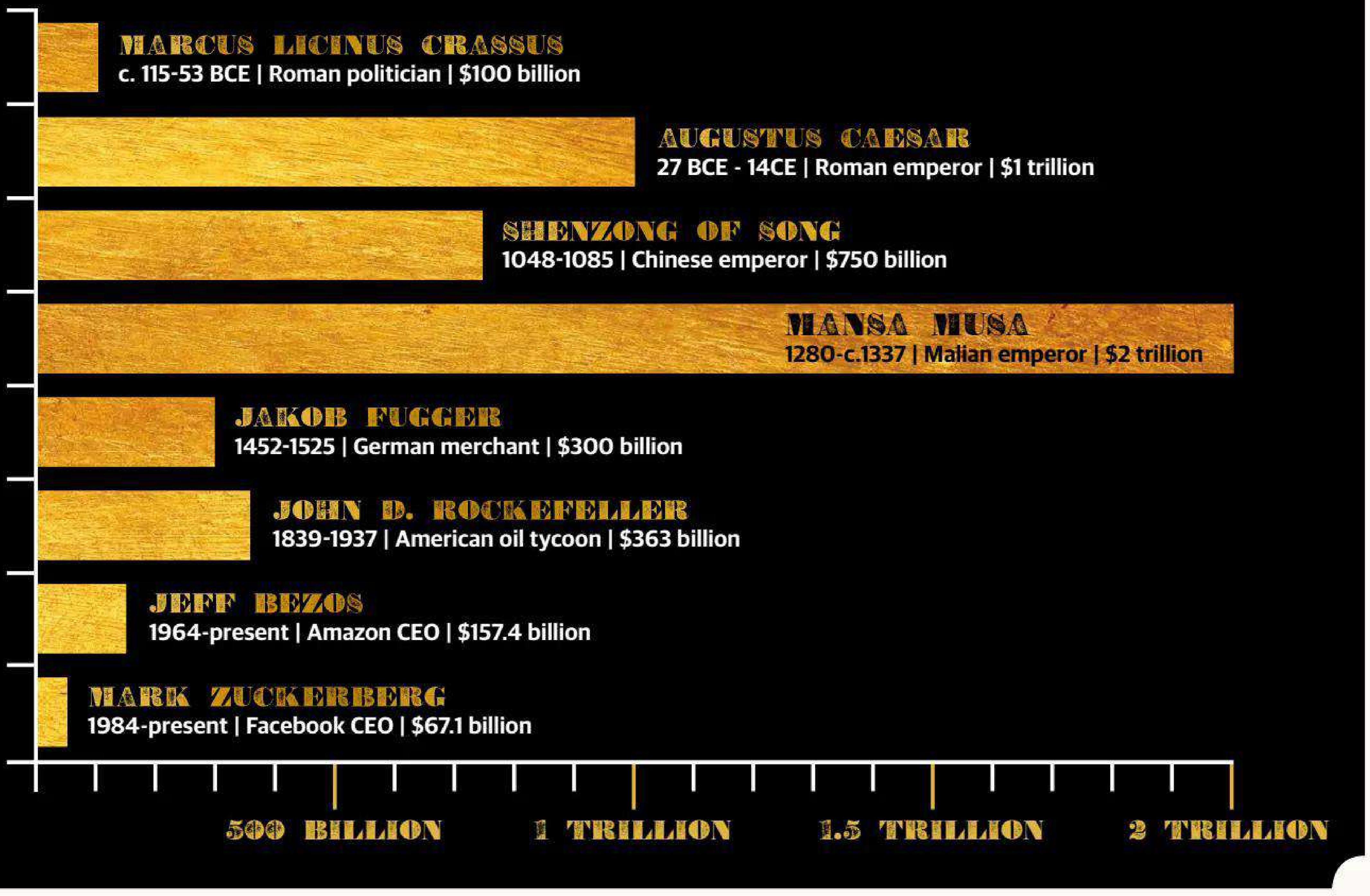
By the early 1300s, things were going so well for the empire that Mansa Abubakari II led an expedition to 'explore the limits of the ocean' (the Atlantic). It is alleged that he fitted out thousands of seaworthy vessels and set off on his travels, leaving a man named Musa as his regent. This was not the first time a reigning monarch had left a designated deputy in charge. The mansas were Muslims, and as one of the pillars of Islam is that every good Muslim should go on pilgrimage to Mecca, pious mansas could be gone for a year or more in pursuit of their religious obligations. So, as Abubakari II headed off into the ocean sunset, Musa became the ruler in all but name. Exactly how far the emperor went or where he might have visited are still hot topics of discussion, but we know for certain that he never came back. Musa was crowned Mansa Musa I in 1312.

> *"Trade routes started to change in favour of the region of Niani"*


In this Spanish portrayal from 1375, Mansa Musa inspects a gold coin, surrounded by the mosques he had built

THE RICH LIST

How does Mansa Musa's net worth compare to other historical billionaires?



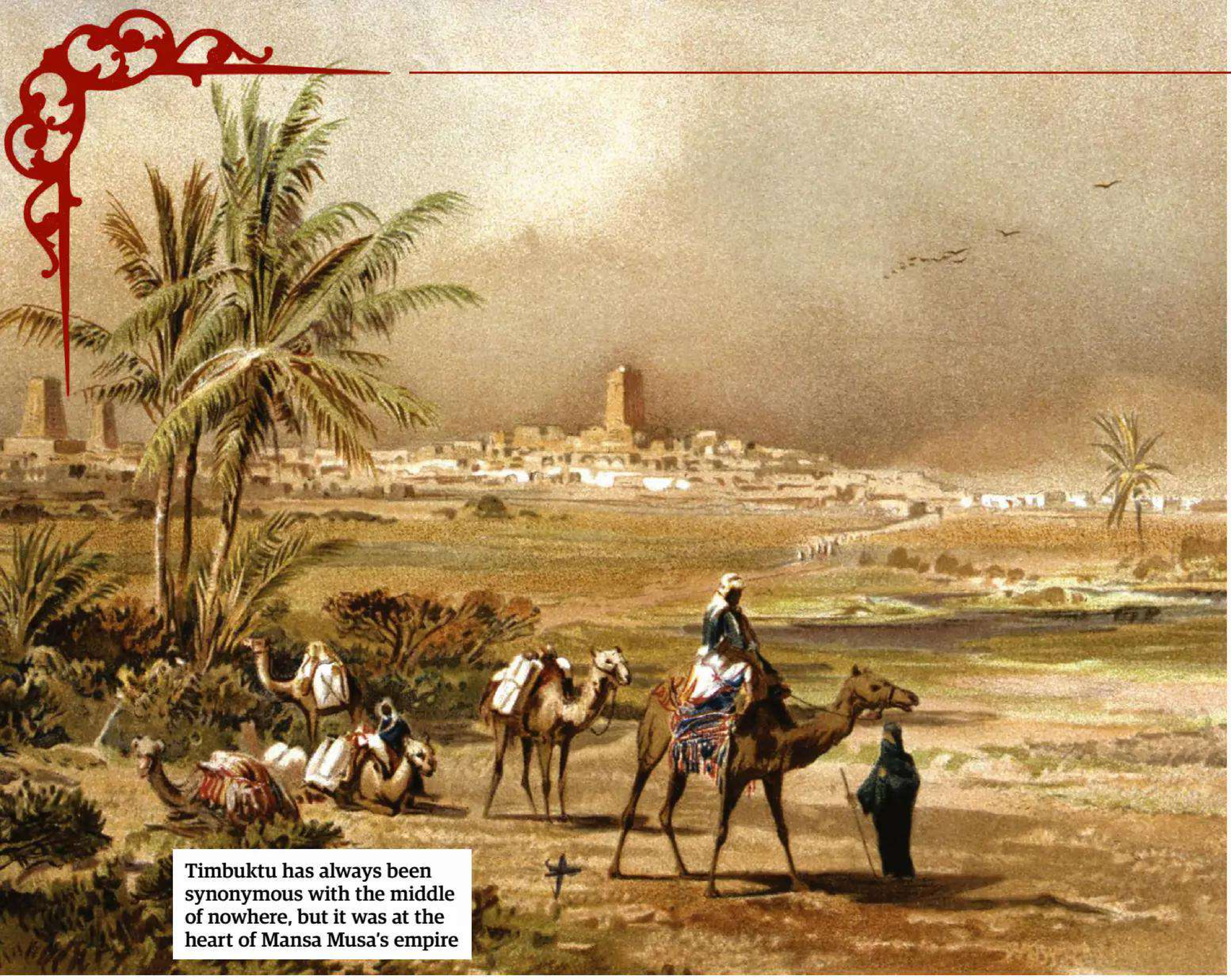
ROLLING IN IT

However, the most remarkable story of the empire is that of Mali's gold. By the time of Mansa Musa, historians have estimated that about half of the known world's gold (not including that of the Americas) was held by the empire. Mali was dripping in the stuff. The great Sankoré Mosque in Timbuktu is now a World Heritage site, and it was paid for by Mansa Musa, who hired the famous architect Abu Ishaq al-Sahili to come all the way from Andalusia (a Muslim territory in modern-day Spain) to design and build. For his hard work, the architect was rewarded with about 200 kilograms of gold. That's about $8,000,000 in today's money, so it's safe to say his fee probably took care of his travel expenses.

Mali's reputation as a source of gold was so widespread that a Spanish map of 1375 depicts Mali with a picture of the mansa holding a gold coin. Putting values on historic wealth is notoriously tricky. We can work out exchanges and inflation, but that often doesn't represent the whole picture. What we can say is that at this time and in this place, gold was a very rare commodity, far rarer than today, which probably means equivalent amounts were worth much more in the 1300s than they are today.

Add to that Mali's lucrative trade in salt – another surprisingly rare commodity in the Middle Ages – and we see a degree of affluence that puts contemporary England's wool production riches in the shadows. Mansa Musa was the richest man on the planet, dwarfing

Images HistoryNmoor/CC BY-SA 4.0 (main), Gallica Digital Library (coin), Getty Images



Timbuktu has always been synonymous with the middle of nowhere, but it was at the heart of Mansa Musa's empire

the personal wealth of everyone from the Holy Roman Emperors to the Mongol Khans.

But the outside world knew almost nothing about this at the start of Mansa Musa's reign. Located in sub-Saharan Africa, Mali was remote from the rest of the Islamic world, and while traders knew that certain commodities were coming out of Africa, they don't seem to have been tied to a specific power. This all changed with Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca, the defining event of his reign. Before he left, Musa followed his predecessor's example and appointed a deputy to make decisions while he was away and to succeed him if he didn't come back. This time Mansa Musa's son, Magha, was chosen. While the fulfilment of a religious requirement was the primary purpose of the journey, Musa also intended to put Mali on the map of the Muslim world. It could, therefore, be argued that Mansa Musa's pilgrimage was the most expensive and the most successful PR campaign in history.

ENROUTE TO MECCA

In 1324, Mansa Musa set off from Niani on the nearly 5,500-mile journey to Mecca. This means that by the time of his return in 1325, he had travelled at least 11,000 miles, an impressive feat in the 14th century, even for a rich man.

Musa travelled up through the Sahara desert to the shores of the Mediterranean in Algeria and, from there, headed along the coast to Egypt and then Cairo.

Though this might sound like an arduous journey even for a seasoned adventurer, Musa made sure to take all his home comforts with him. For starters, he had 80 camels for the sole purpose of transporting gold, each beast carrying up to 136 kilograms, meaning that the camels alone had (again, in modern terms) about $400 million worth of gold bullion. The chronicles record that this entourage further consisted of 60,000 slaves, plus Musa's personal retinue of 12,000 female servants, each of them allegedly carrying 1.8 kilograms of gold, so another $15 million. But that wasn't all. The vanguard of the procession was headed by 500 slaves, each carrying a gold-adorned staff, and members of the entourage were dressed in fine brocades and Persian silks.

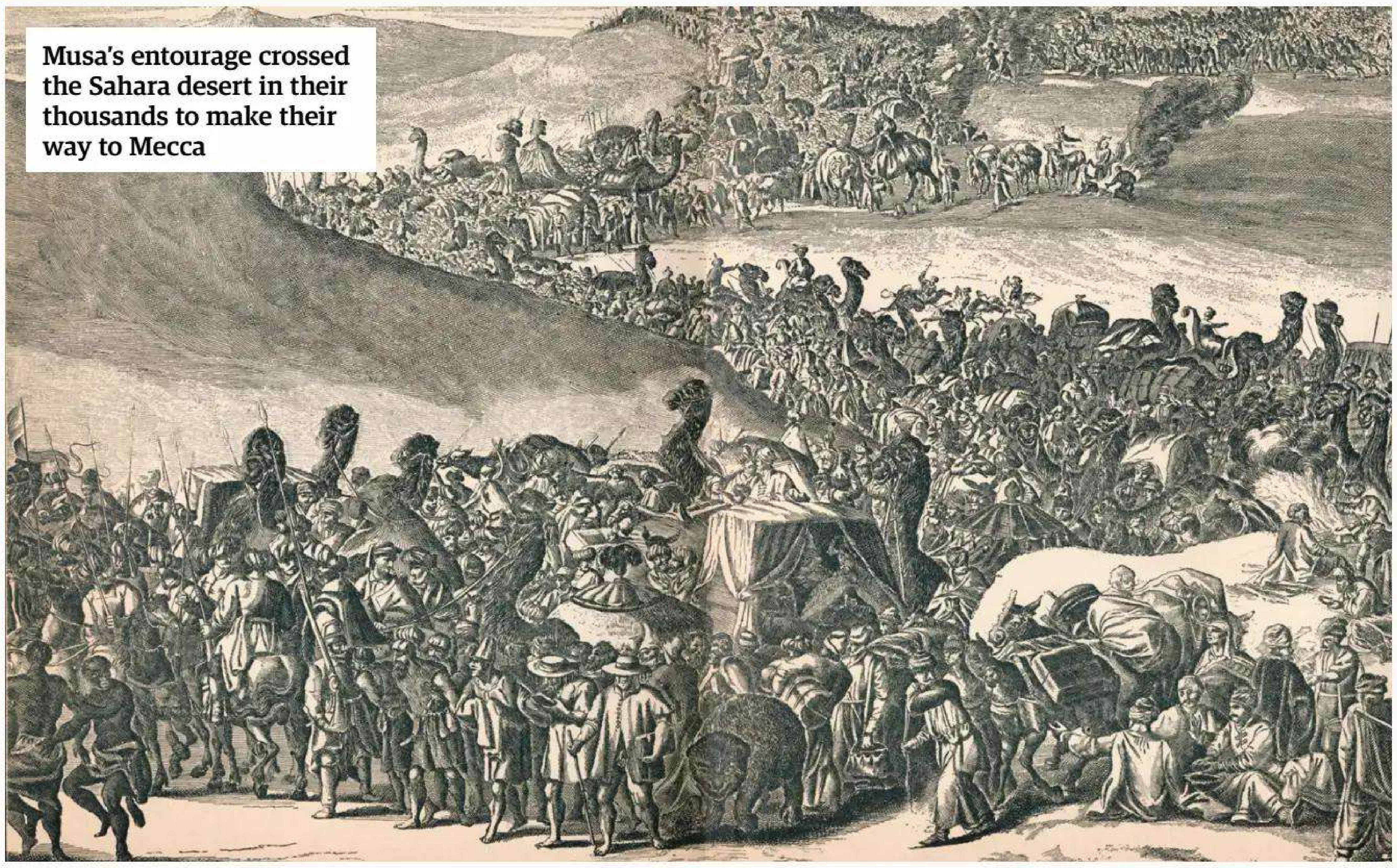
While these figures alone are stunning, it must also be remembered that all of these 72,000 people (plus Musa) had to be fed every day for about a year. The cost of that alone would have been eye-watering, especially since Mansa was used to dining most lavishly.

The purpose of taking nearly $½ billion worth of gold on pilgrimage was not for fees or bribes, but for charity. Another pillar of Islam is Zakat, the giving of 2.5 per cent of one's assets each year to benefit the poor. While it is tempting to claim that the gold destined for Mecca was therefore just 2.5 per cent of Mansa Musa's wealth, it was more likely a grand gesture, perhaps to compensate for the years he hadn't got around to fulfilling his religious obligations.

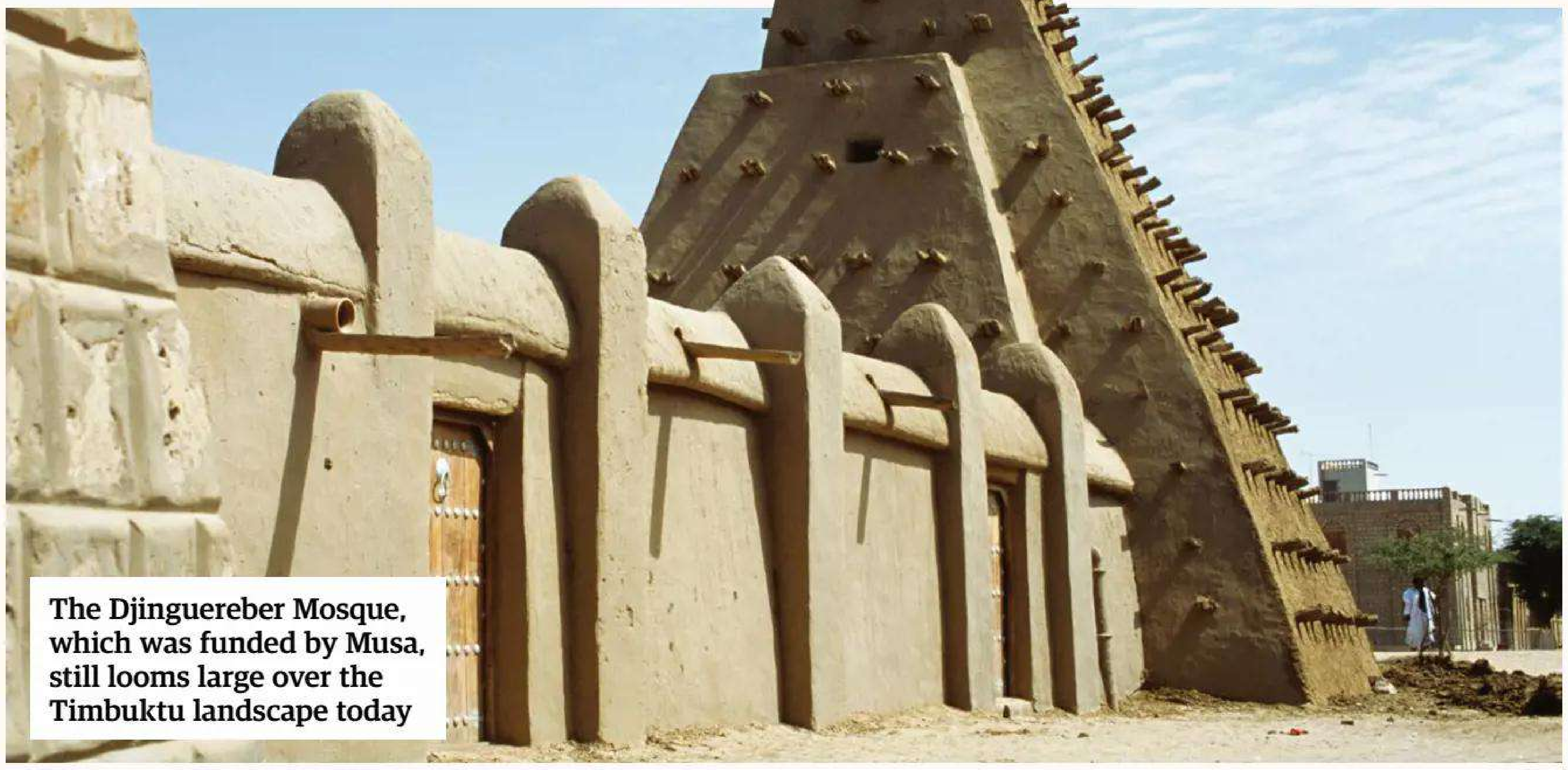
Musa was full of generosity, and he changed some people's lives with the number of gifts to the poor that he distributed. His grand tour was virtually paved with gold. It was also said that every week, wherever he found himself for Friday prayers, he paid for a mosque to be built. As he was away for about a year, that's roughly 52 mosques to add to the bill.

Musa was warmly received by the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, al-Nasir Muhammad, during his layover in Cario. However, their meeting got off to a rocky start. Musa initially refused even to see the sultan, and once in his presence refused to kneel before him. Fortunately, he was persuaded to do so, and an unpleasant diplomatic incident was averted.

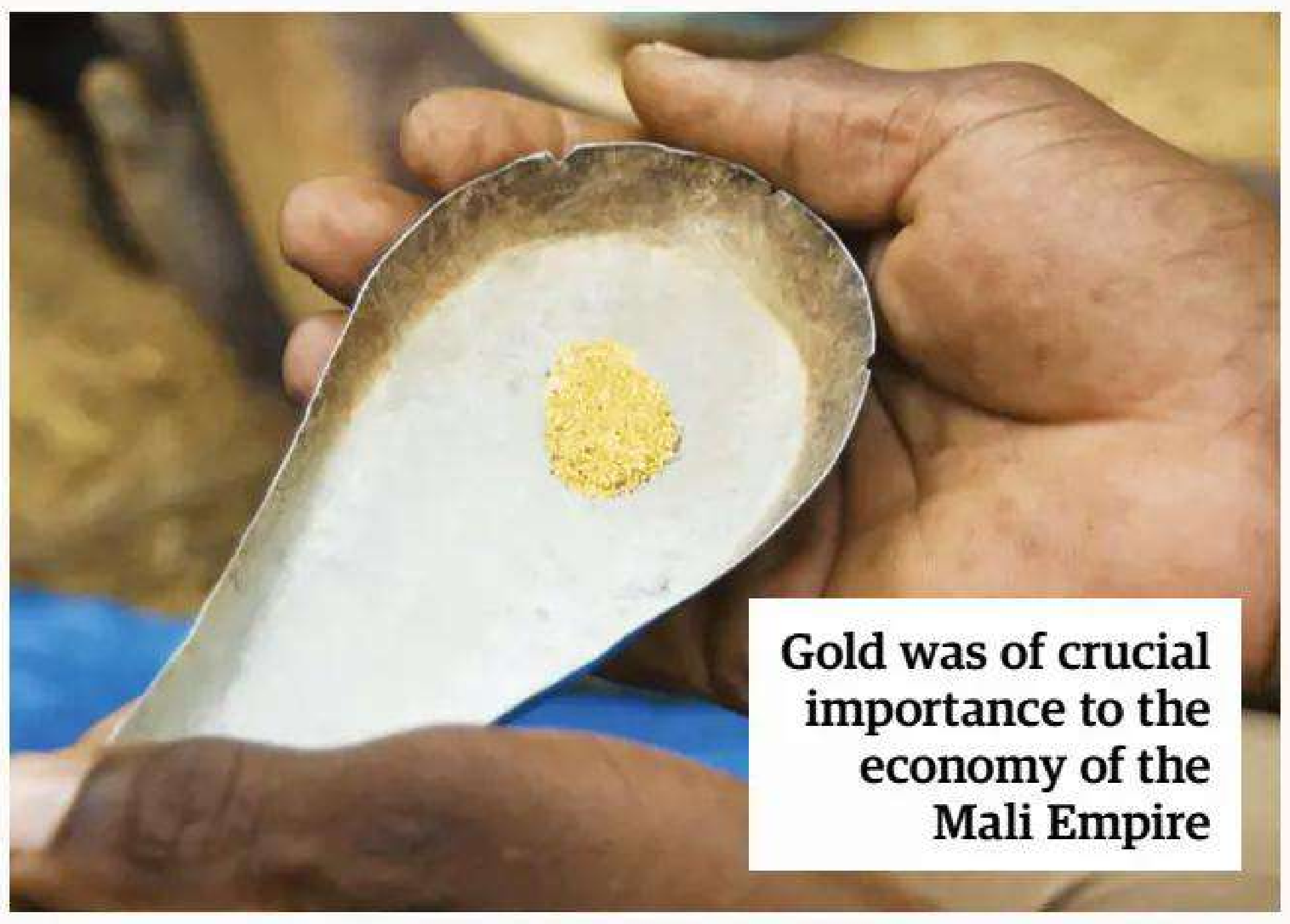
The sultan had been brought up in the dying days of the Crusades and had faced attacks, not only by rival Muslim powers but by the Mongols from Persia. Indeed, by the time he met Musa, he had been on and off the throne three times (but this time he stayed in power until his death in 1341), so Musa was a welcome distraction from more immediate and dangerous challenges. Mali was too far away to be a threat, and its ruler was a pious man, who



Musa's entourage crossed the Sahara desert in their thousands to make their way to Mecca



The Djinguereber Mosque, which was funded by Musa, still looms large over the Timbuktu landscape today



Gold was of crucial importance to the economy of the Mali Empire

> *"A Spanish map of 1375 depicts (Mansa Musa) holding a gold coin"*

insisted on showering the sultan – along with every other court emir and royal office holder – with gifts. What was not to like?

CREDIT CRUNCH

Unfortunately, all of this generosity had unintended consequences, which ended up being a greater threat than all the Mongols in the East. When everyone had gold, naturally prices went up. When there were more gold coins than anything else, the price of essential items such as bread increased exponentially. The economy of the entire Maghreb region was broken and suffered hyperinflation as an inadvertent result of Mansa's good intentions.

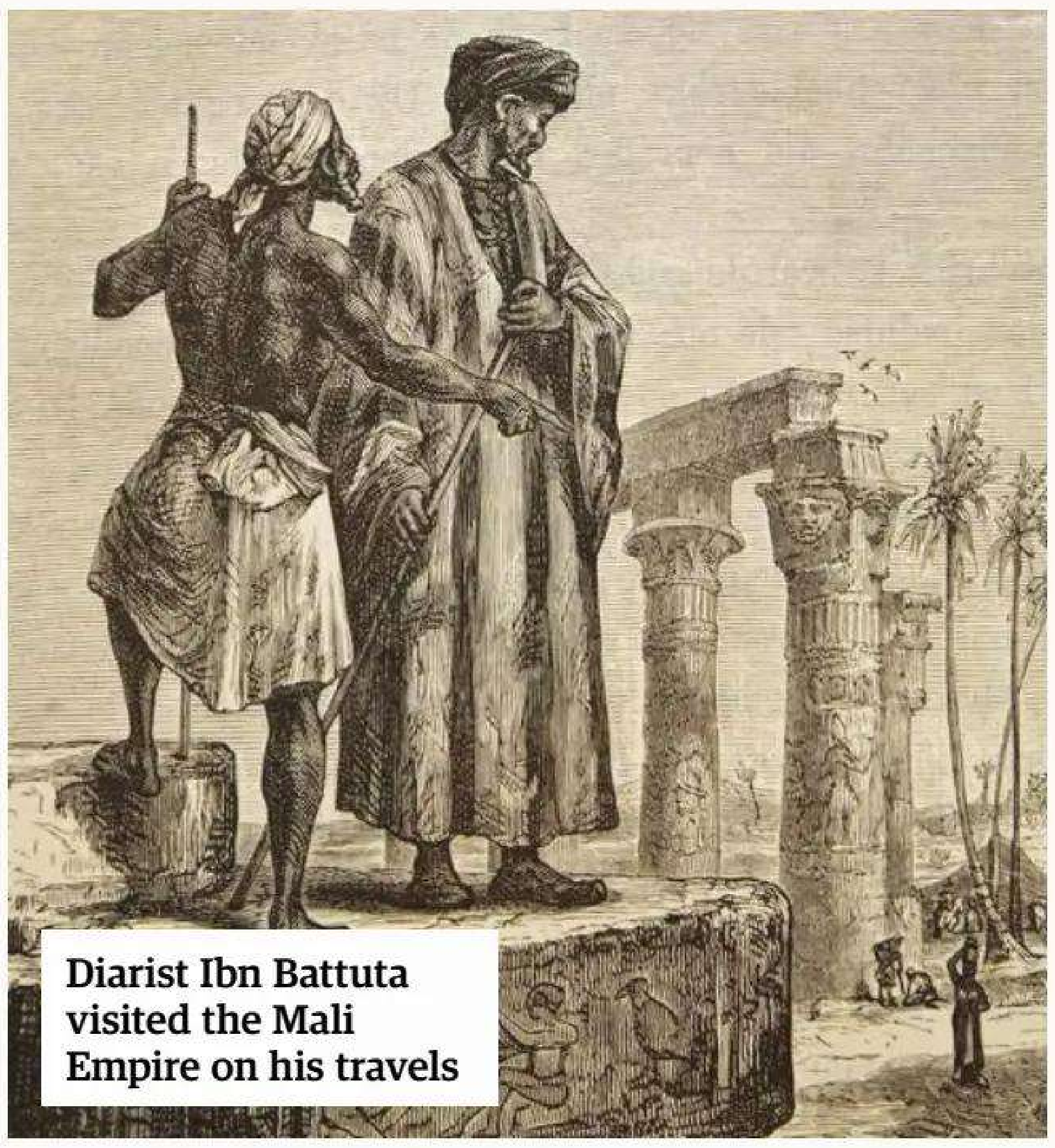
The impact of all this was greatest in Cairo. On his return from Mecca, Musa recognised the economic chaos that he had wreaked. He tried to fix it by ordering his retinue to borrow all the gold they could from moneylenders in Cairo. This was to be done at a high rate of interest. So now Musa created debt for himself on a trip that had already cost nearly $½ billion. While the gesture helped, it didn't get rid of the problem. Musa's borrowing in an attempt to adjust gold prices makes him the only man in history to directly control the price of gold in the Mediterranean region.

Meanwhile, back in Mali, Gao, a city that was prone to rebelling, had risen up against the empire. By the time Musa was on the return leg of his journey, his son Magha had brought it to heel but was still a hotbed of defiance. Musa decided to detour his returning entourage through the city – some 1,000 miles east of his capital at Niani – not to gloat over the empire's victory in defeating the rebels, but to wow the locals with displays of the piety and riches of their benevolent and powerful ruler. It worked. The city remained part of the Mali Empire for more than 100 years. Musa also invested in great architectural projects in the city to impress its residents and remind them what it meant to be part of the great empire.

While Christianity didn't feature in the Mali Empire (that would come much later from European missionaries), there existed local shamanistic traditions that might have had the power to rival Islam. As a devout Muslim, Musa wanted to ensure that nobody would be distracted by these pagan temptations. It is, therefore, unsurprising that while he was responsible for many impressive architectural achievements, mosques and madrasahs figured heavily among them.

While it's tempting to focus on construction and trade, it shouldn't be forgotten that Niani is a long way from the African coast, which meant there was a lot of land to be conquered before the Malians could access the seas. And cities like Gao and Timbuktu were far away from the capital, which shows expansion in every direction. This meant rebellions, armies and wars to maintain control, so the Mali Empire wasn't exactly a peaceful paradise. Many of the wars have been forgotten, but the opulence, and architecture have lingered in the memory to produce a legacy any ruler would be proud of.

After a long reign ruling an empire, spending vast amounts of money to support the sciences, and financing the construction of innumerable religious and other buildings, no one knows how or when Mansa Musa died. There are no records, which is a strange omission.



Diarist Ibn Battuta visited the Mali Empire on his travels

We know more about his son and his reign than we do about the man who put Mali on the map. There are stories that he simply abdicated in favour of his son, and the fact that there are no reports of a palace coup or assassination strongly implies that Mansa Musa died peacefully in his bed. Whatever happened to this fabulously wealthy emperor in the last days of his life, no one disputes that Mansa Musa ruled for 25 years and that he was a great leader.

When the famous Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta arrived in the empire in the 1350s, about 20 years after the death of Mansa Musa, he was surprised by the affluence, the scholarship and the piety of Mali's people.

But the Mali Empire, like all empires, declined over time. However, contrary to natural assumptions, it wasn't European colonists that took advantage of its vulnerability, but a central West African empire known as the Bamana Empire. They superseded the mansas of Mali.

Though Mali may have faded into obscurity, the legacy of the fantastic Mansa and his vast wealth lives on. As we've said, the value of his riches is hard to quantify, but the best estimates put it at $2 trillion. So far no one has amassed more – not a mighty king or queen, or a titan of industry - meaning Mansa Musa is not only the richest person in history, but the richest person of all time.

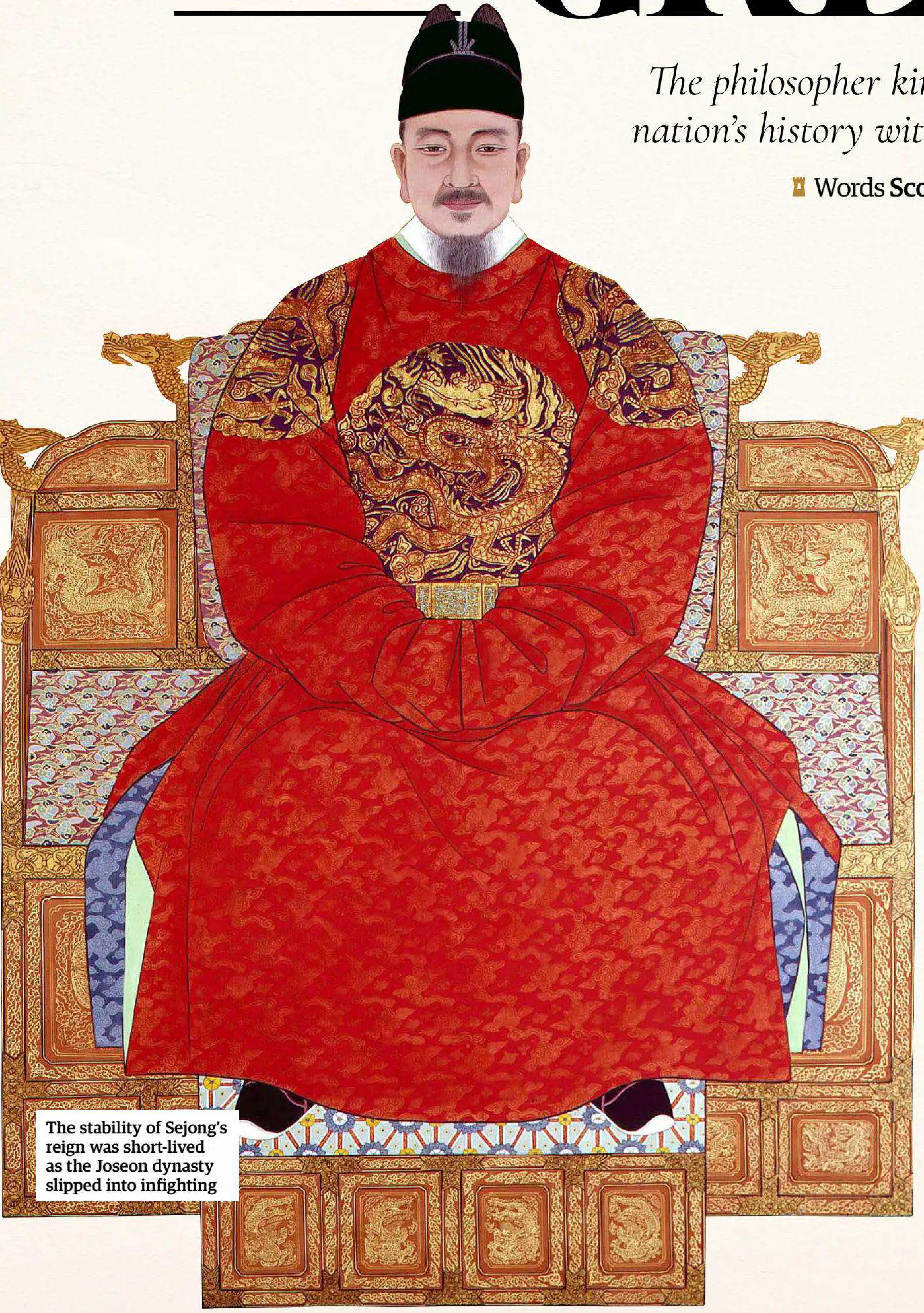
Images Alamy, Getty Images, Léon Benett/PD (Ibn Battuta)

Korea, 1418-50

SEJONG THE GREAT

The philosopher king who rewrote his nation's history with a modern outlook

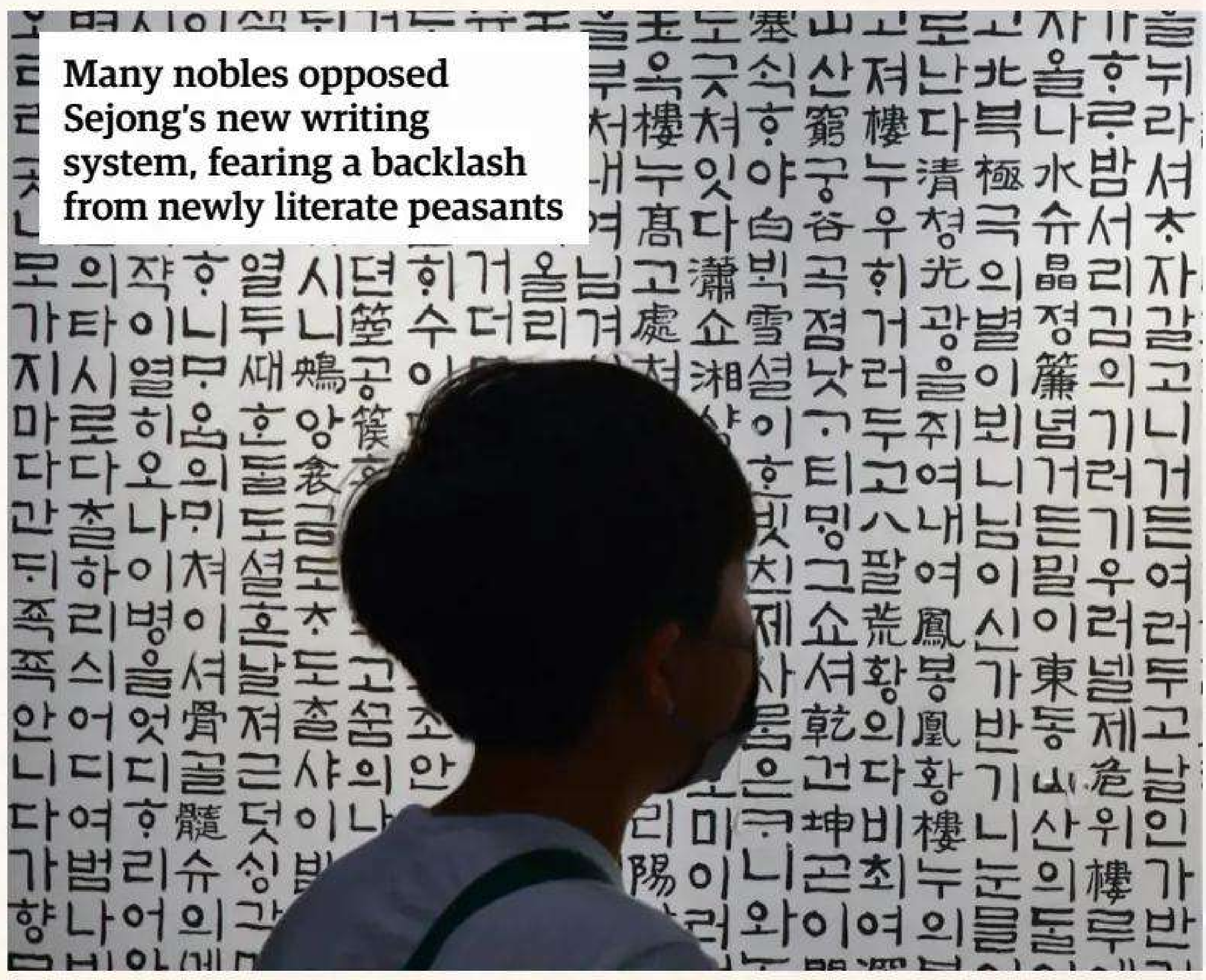
Words **Scott Reeves**



The stability of Sejong's reign was short-lived as the Joseon dynasty slipped into infighting

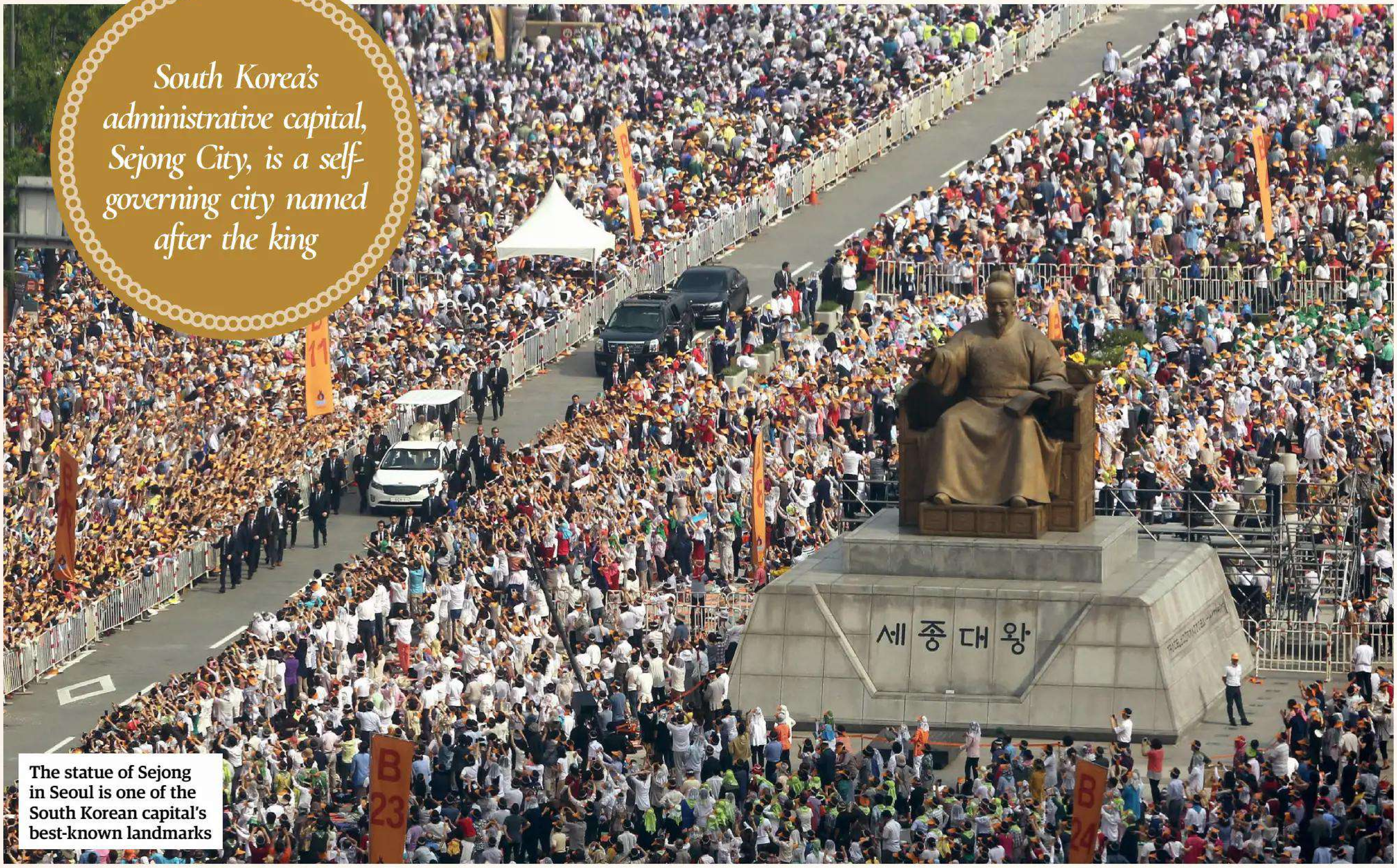
The Joseon dynasty underwent a mini dynastic crisis under King Taejong. He regarded his oldest son as unfit to succeed, but when the heir was removed from his position, Taejong's second son was having none of it – he fled to a monastery and declared his intention to become a monk. That left Taejong's third son as the unexpected heir. Thankfully, Sejong would prove an inspired choice.

Taejong ensured Sejong's succession by purging his palace of any opponents and abdicating early. Upon taking charge, the new King Sejong cracked down on his biggest critics: the Buddhists. He redistributed temple lands and closed five of seven Buddhist schools. Instead, the Chinese idea of Confucianism became the chosen faith. Sejong was also interested in science and technology and created a royal



Many nobles opposed Sejong's new writing system, fearing a backlash from newly literate peasants

South Korea's administrative capital, Sejong City, is a self-governing city named after the king



The statue of Sejong in Seoul is one of the South Korean capital's best-known landmarks

institute called the Hall of Worthies to fund and encourage research. Despite so many clever minds working under him, perhaps the greatest achievement to come as a result of Sejong's reign – a new, phonetic writing system – came from the pen of Sejong himself. With Sejong's invention, Korean writing was no longer a complicated and difficult-to-learn offshoot of Chinese script, but a bespoke solution that boosted Korean literacy levels.

Sejong's modern, technology-driven Korea became an early tiger economy. New agricultural techniques were introduced that benefited from Korean inventions like more accurate water clocks and sundials. Thanks to burgeoning food supplies, Korea underwent an economic boom. Sejong further stimulated growth by replacing Korea's barter economy with one modelled on a national currency, the tongbo. Using his new coins, Sejong introduced a new taxation system and used its proceeds to fund a welfare state that even paid for slaves to have maternity leave.

With Sejong's reforms, Korea became a tempting target for foreign powers, especially Tang China. To defend his borders, Sejong reinforced his military, encouraging his armies to make use of new technologies like cannons and gunpowder. He pushed troublesome Japanese pirates from islands in the Tsushima Strait and had his generals lead expeditions to the north.

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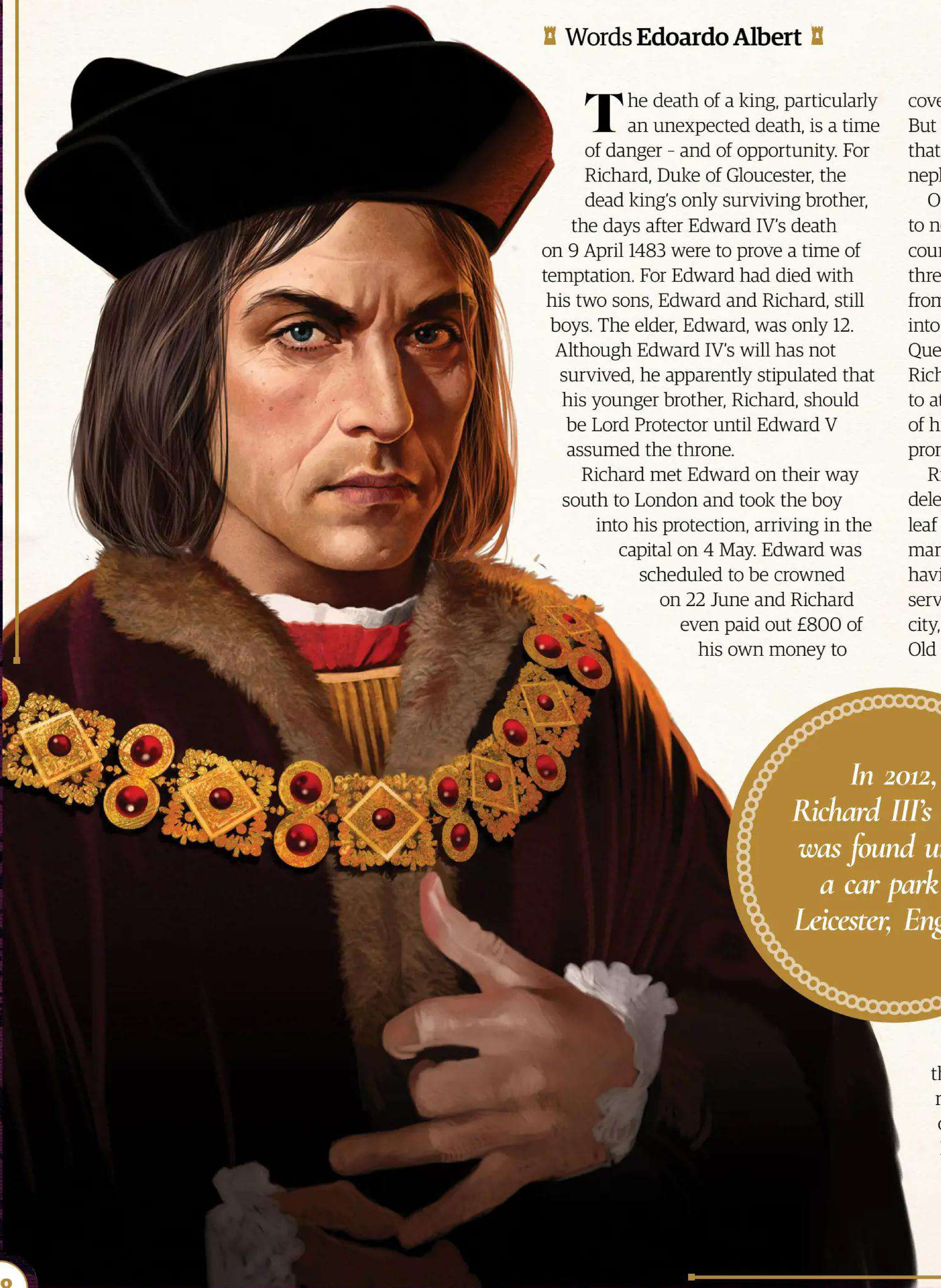
Sejong has been featured on the 10,000 won banknote in Korea

England, 1483-85

RICHARD III

The last king of England to die in battle – and the first to be found by archaeologists

Words **Edoardo Albert**



The death of a king, particularly an unexpected death, is a time of danger - and of opportunity. For Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the dead king's only surviving brother, the days after Edward IV's death on 9 April 1483 were to prove a time of temptation. For Edward had died with his two sons, Edward and Richard, still boys. The elder, Edward, was only 12. Although Edward IV's will has not survived, he apparently stipulated that his younger brother, Richard, should be Lord Protector until Edward V assumed the throne.

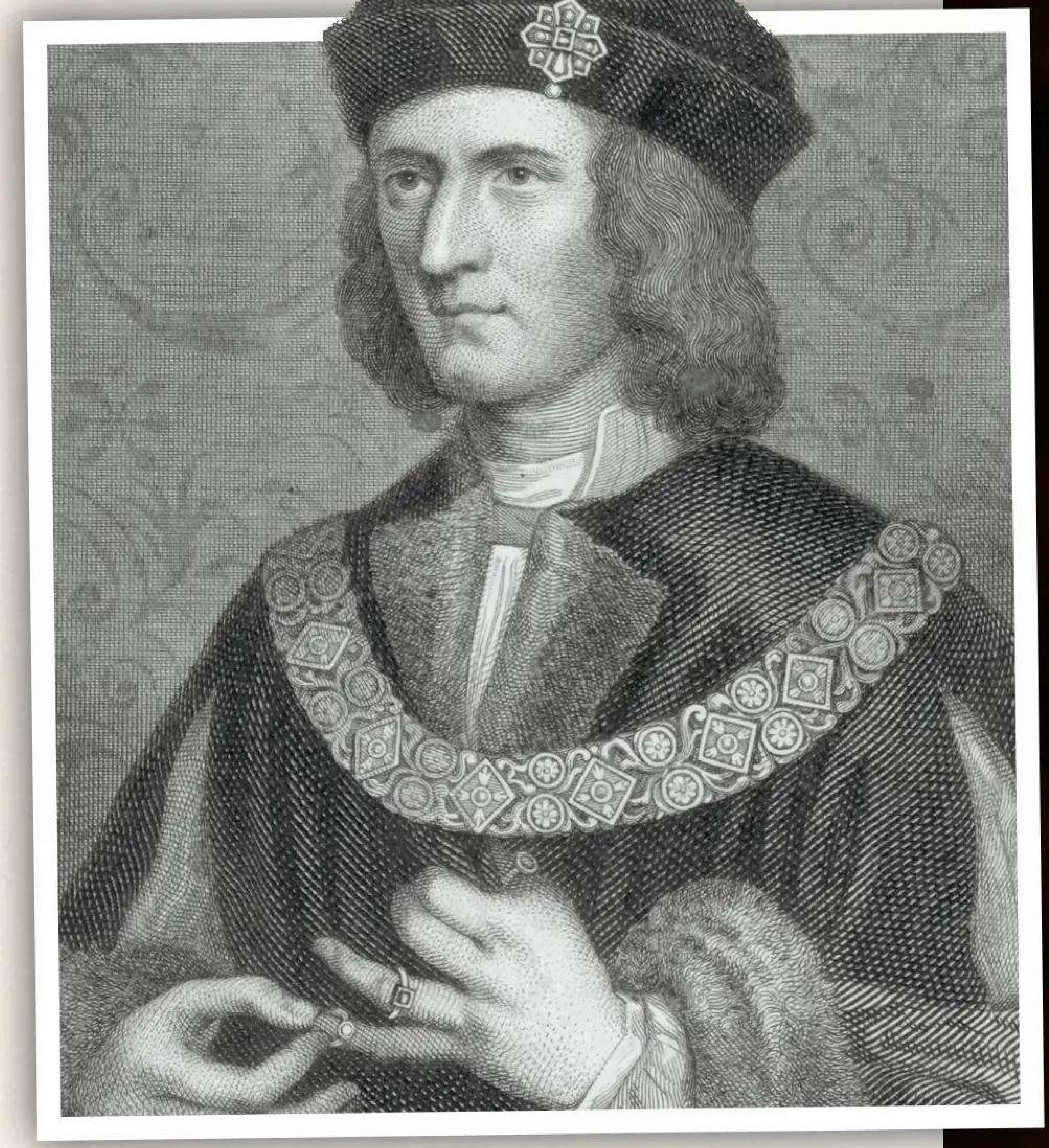
Richard met Edward on their way south to London and took the boy into his protection, arriving in the capital on 4 May. Edward was scheduled to be crowned on 22 June and Richard even paid out £800 of his own money to cover the expenses of the new king, Edward V. But somewhere around 9 June, Richard decided that he was going to take the throne from his nephew and that he was prepared to kill for it.

Over the next two weeks, Richard moved to neutralise the late king's most trusted councillors, covering his actions by implying a threat of instability in a country still recovering from the Wars of the Roses. The final piece fell into place on 16 June when Edward IV's widow, Queen Elizabeth, allowed her younger son, Richard, to leave the sanctuary of Westminster to attend his brother's coronation. With both of his brother's sons in his custody, Richard promptly postponed the coronation.

Richard then orchestrated a campaign to delegitimise the two young princes with a fig leaf of their parents not having been legitimately married. It was a contrivance, but with Richard having disposed of his nephew's most faithful servants and his own men camped outside the city, the preaching of a sermon outside St Paul's Old Cathedral on 22 June declaring Richard the rightful king became the public proclamation of his claim. On 26 June 1483 he was crowned king in Westminster Abbey.

Richard set off on a royal progress to introduce himself to the country but in early July he learned of an attempt to rescue the two young princes from the Tower of London. Edward and Richard became gradually less public through the summer until they finally disappeared altogether. There is no direct evidence that Richard ordered their murder, but as their guardian he was responsible for their safety. With Edward out of the way, the most obvious threat to Richard's rule had been removed.

In 2012, Richard III's body was found under a car park in Leicester, England



The face of King Richard III reconstructed from his excavated remains

> *"The throne should be decided on the field of combat"*

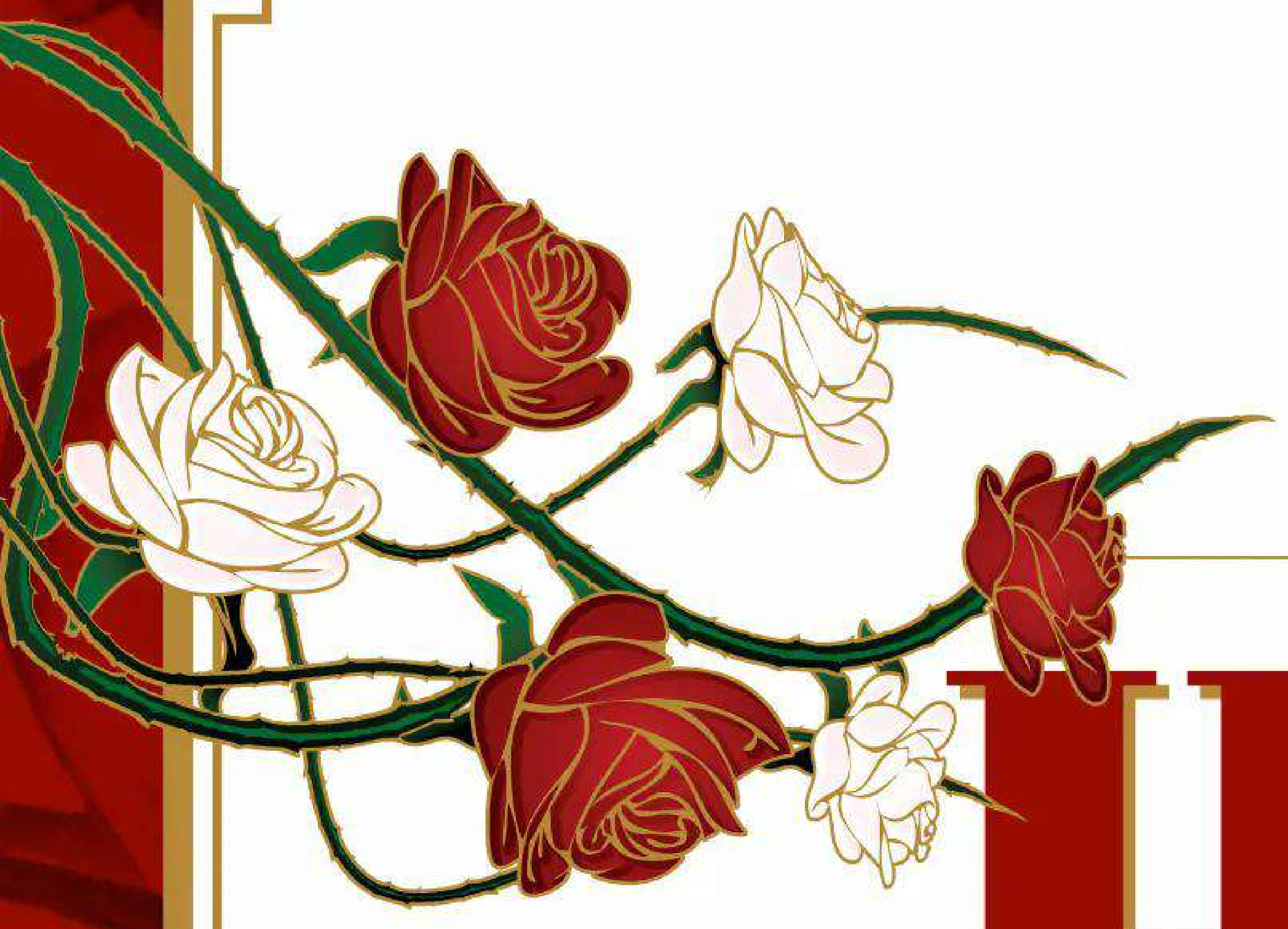
But there was another. Henry Tudor had at best a marginal claim to the throne but Richard's usurpation had provoked such revulsion among much of the nobility that men began to rally to Henry's cause. The first rebellion, in 1483, collapsed for lack of planning but Richard realised from it that he could not count on the support of his elder brother's officials in the south - Richard's own powerbase was in the north. To shore up his rule, he started to replace royal officials with his own men but the displaced nobles, smarting from the perceived injustice, gravitated towards France where Henry Tudor was assembling allies and, soon, an army. Richard had based his usurpation of the throne upon the promise of good government but the exigencies of facing continued unrest meant that Richard had to raise more taxes than his countrymen wished to pay, while the death of his only son in 1484 left him without an heir.

On 1 August 1485, Henry Tudor sailed from France with a small army, landing near Milford Haven on 7 August. He began a slow march across Wales and into England, gathering men and, crucially, initiating contacts with the Stanleys, the earl of Derby and his son, who indicated that they might favour Henry Tudor. Richard believed the Stanleys to be allies of his. Richard, meanwhile, was gathering his own army for the final confrontation. Victory would render him the throne by the absolute right of battle and as Richard was an accomplished warrior, he probably welcomed that the throne should be decided on the field of combat. On 22 August 1485, the two armies met at Bosworth Field. Henry Tudor was no soldier and left the command of his army to the experienced Earl of Oxford, retiring to the rear of the lines with his bodyguard. Seeing him there, Richard decided to end the battle by decapitating the enemy army and led a charge of his household knights directly at Henry Tudor. Richard came almost within striking distance of his foe before the Stanleys, seeing that Richard had likewise isolated himself from the main body of his army, came into the battle on Henry Tudor's behalf, surrounding and pushing back Richard and his knights. Forced back into marshy ground, Richard fought on until he was struck down by a halberd. When Richard's body was found by archaeologists, analysis of his remains showed that he had suffered eleven wounds, nine to the head. The last of the Plantagenets was dead.

The House of Tudor took the throne and proceeded to mount one of the most effective propaganda campaigns in history. There can be little doubt that Richard was ruthless but there is just as little reason to believe that he had planned to take the throne before his brother's untimely death.

Had Edward IV lived another few years, Richard would almost certainly have served as his nephew's most loyal lieutenant. But the chance of the throne bred murder in his soul and led, finally, to his death: the last king of England to die in battle.

Illustration Joe Cummings **Images** Getty Images



England, 1485-1509

HENRY VII

Meet the king who won his crown through battle and had to fight throughout his reign to keep it, and in doing so established the mighty Tudor dynasty

Words **Wayne Bartlett**

An invasion force set off from France and landed in Wales before heading into the heart of England itself. The year was 1485 and at the head of this army was Henry Tudor who, for most of his 28 years on Earth, had been on the run, constantly looking over his shoulder and unable to find peace.

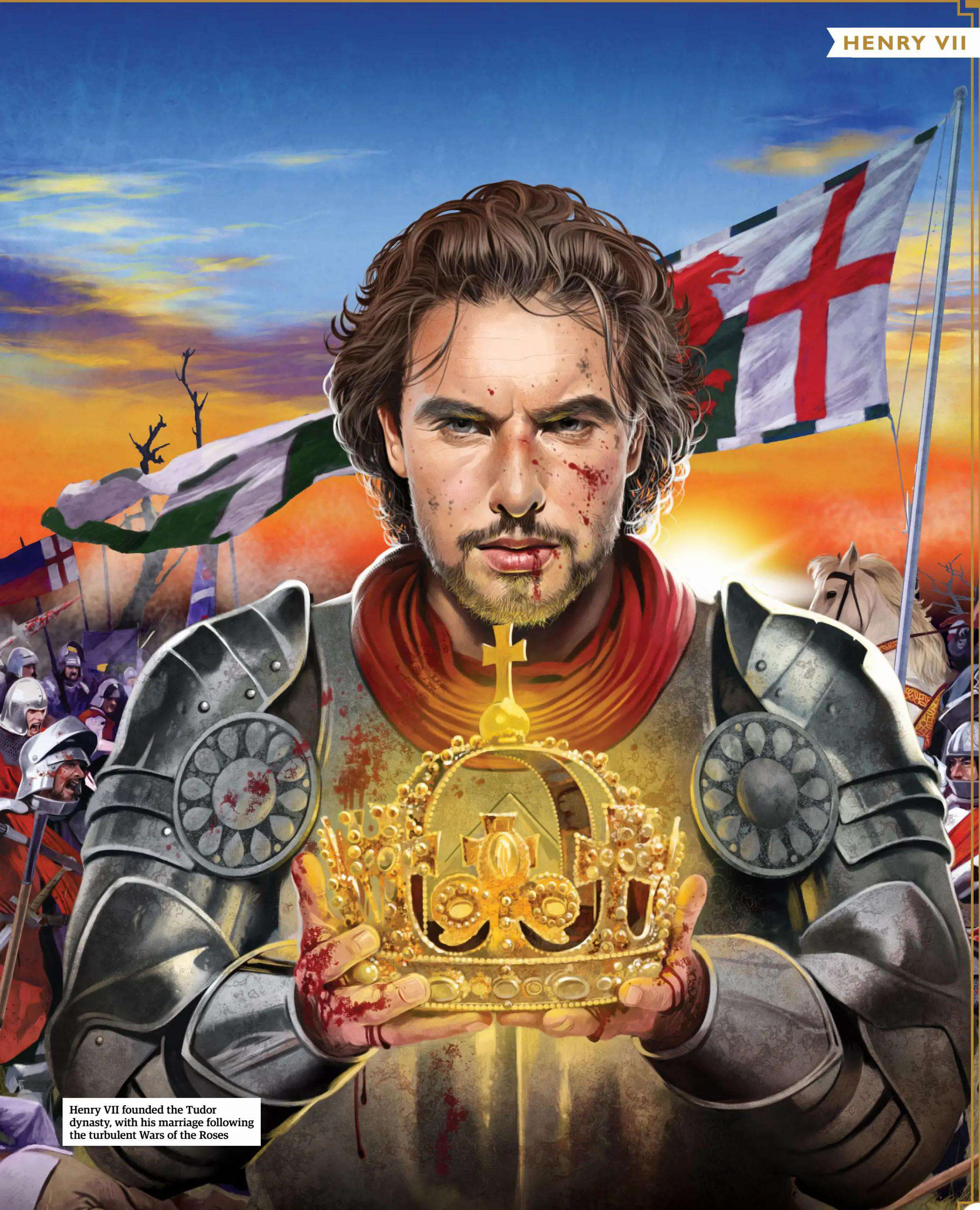
There were two reasons why the force landed in Wales - Henry wanted to remain undetected for as long as possible to give him time to build up support, and it was also the land where he had been born in 1457, at Pembroke Castle. The man who would go on to found the Tudor dynasty was born to an earl and a countess, and had a minor claim to the throne through his mother, Lady Margaret of Beaufort, a descendant of Edward III. Despite this tenuous royal lineage, by the early 1470s he was the main Lancastrian claimant remaining, as the Wars of the Roses - a battle for the crown between the Houses of Lancaster and York that began in 1455 and saw the fortunes of the two rival houses ebb and flow - had resulted in the deaths of the rest.

When the course of the Wars of Roses changed again in 1471 with Yorkist king Edward IV reclaiming the throne, Henry fled to Brittany for safety. He would not return to England again for 14 years and this life of constantly being under threat would affect how he ruled when he became king of England. In Brittany (a duchy independent of both France and England), Henry was under Francis II's protection, who resisted Edward's attempts to send him to England and so probably saved his life. Edward died unexpectedly in 1483 and his brother Richard of Gloucester, who would become Richard III, took control and imprisoned Edward's two sons in the Tower of London. To this day, debate still rages about what exactly happened to them, but there was no doubt that Richard was now in control.

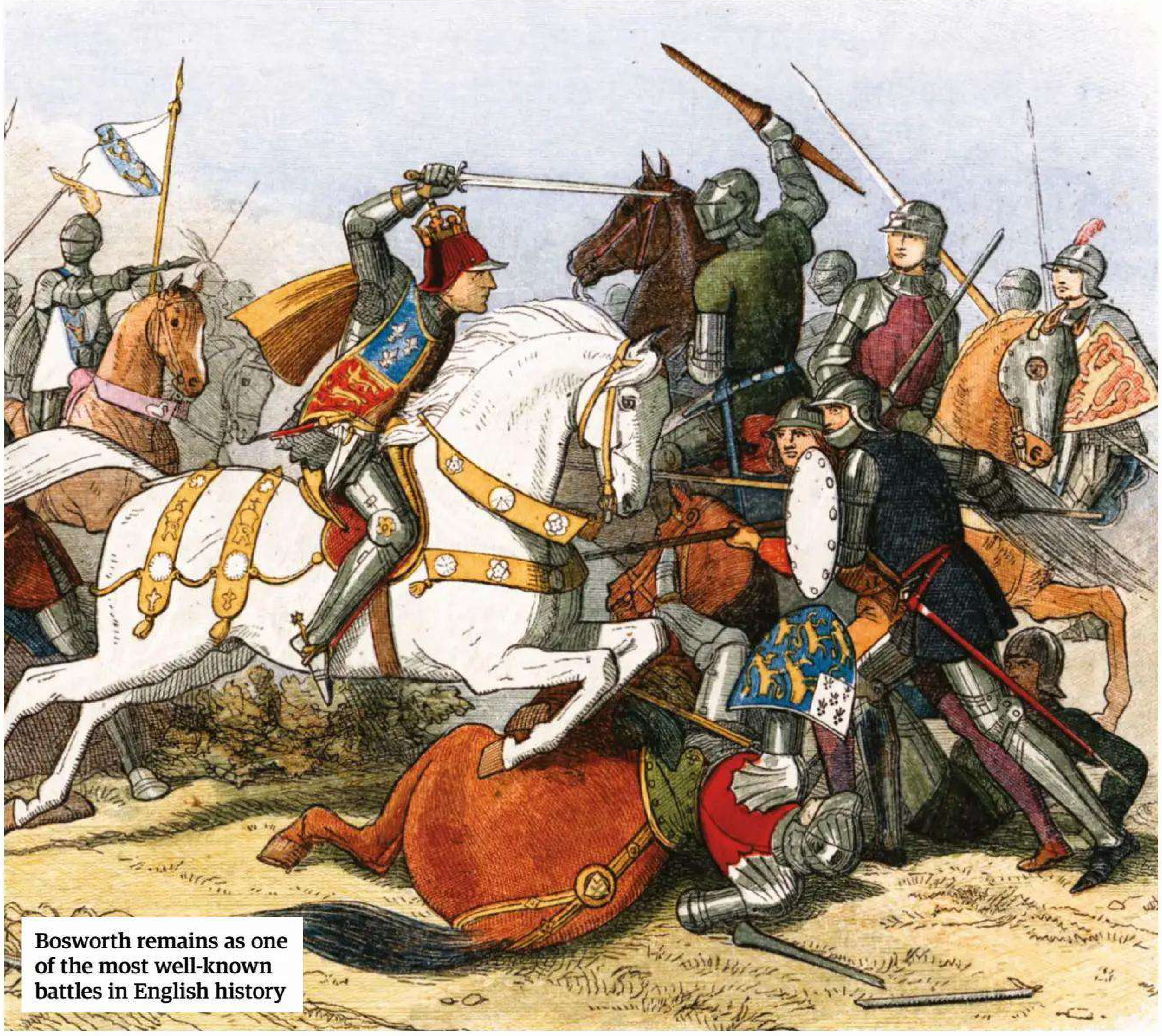
> *"Henry VII founded a dynasty that would rule England and Wales for 118 years"*

Richard was king, but many were unhappy that Edward's sons wouldn't get the chance to succeed their father. This increasing political division in England meant that, after years in the wilderness, Henry was thrust back into the political spotlight with many believing he should assert his claim to the throne. This situation was managed with what would become typical political cunning by Henry, who announced that if he did return and become king then he would marry Elizabeth of York and thus unite the two warring Houses. When he learned that Richard was exerting pressure on Francis to release his rival to him, Henry escaped to France dressed as a servant. It was in Paris that his supporters gathered around him and made their plans to invade England and depose the Yorkist king, who had only been sitting on the throne for two years. On 7 August 1485, Henry landed at Milton Haven Waterway in Wales and prayed to God while kneeling on the sand of the Welsh beach.

Henry's invasion force didn't stay secret for long, and soon Richard's larger army was in pursuit, eventually intercepting Henry's forces south of Market Bosworth in Leicestershire. On 22 August, the final confrontation of the Wars of the Roses took place as the two rivals met each other on the battlefield. Henry's forces were in danger of being overwhelmed, but then William Stanley, who had been watching from the sidelines, threw his men into battle and instructed them to attack Richard. This action by one of the land's most powerful men was the decisive moment in the battle and the king



Henry VII founded the Tudor dynasty, with his marriage following the turbulent Wars of the Roses



Bosworth remains as one of the most well-known battles in English history

of England was cut down, battered to death, stripped naked and taken to Leicester, where his dead body was exposed to the public.

Against all odds, the man who had spent most of his life in exile had won. The crown was his, but Henry knew that if he had won it in battle then he could also lose it in battle. The struggle to keep his crown and establish a legacy had just begun.

All the years that Henry had spent in exile had robbed him of an intimate knowledge of the royal court, but had made him a sharp observer. His keen mind immediately grasped how important appearances were; it was not enough to just be king – he had to look, act and sound like a king. It is often said that history is written by the victors and following his coronation on 30 October, that is exactly what Henry set about doing. He used his first parliament to change the date that he became king to a day before the Battle of Bosworth, thereby making Richard the attempted usurper and ensuring that everyone who had opposed Henry could, in the future, be tried with treason.

A coin produced during Henry's reign – the king had a well-known love of money

Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV, united the warring Houses of the white rose of York and the red of Lancaster and led to the creation of a powerful symbol: the Tudor rose, which incorporated the two colours. He also commissioned the first ever pound coin, a gold sovereign with an image of him on a throne in all his splendour on the obverse and a Tudor double rose on the reverse.

While these symbols were powerful propaganda, important in trying to legitimise the new Tudor rule, they were nothing compared to the importance of producing a male heir. The birth of Prince Arthur, named after the mythical king of Camelot, in 1486 meant that the new king could breathe a little easier. While the nation rejoiced at the prince's birth, there were still those who questioned Henry's legitimacy.

In 1487, a rebellion began in Ireland around a boy called Lambert Simnel, who claimed to be the Yorkist earl of Warwick, son of Edward IV's brother George, Duke of Clarence. The force invaded England but was no match for Henry's troops, who decimated their rivals at the Battle of Stoke. Simnel, who was merely a puppet, was pardoned by Henry. However, the fact that Henry had been forced into battle to keep his crown was a sign that his rule was not secure.

Just four years later, Henry had to deal with another rebellion. This time, a young man called Perkin Warbeck claimed to be one of the Princes in the Tower whom it was thought Richard had killed. This was a serious problem for Henry, as he knew that much of his support had only come because of the disappearance of the two princes. While Warbeck's claim was widely discredited, it would provide a good excuse for people to rise up against him. Henry responded by setting up an extensive surveillance network, with spies across the country and Europe keeping a close eye on anyone who seemed likely to cause the king trouble.

Henry had always been a suspicious, even paranoid, king, and with Warbeck's claim this only increased. The spy network was increasingly well-funded and Henry's privy chamber, his personal space where he worked and slept, became harder to gain admittance to as the number of people he trusted decreased. The king became obsessed with two things: money and security. His style of government became increasingly personal, with his signature required for all substantial financial transactions. For Henry, money meant control.

When Warbeck was captured in 1497 and executed two years later, it was a vindication

THE TUDOR SPY NETWORK

John Morton was someone whose political support was fluid, to say the least; originally a Lancastrian supporter, he changed sides to the Yorkists before allying himself with Henry after his victory at the Battle of Bosworth. While Morton's loyalty could be called into question, his skills and talent could not. Henry needed capable men and appointed him to the prestigious position of archbishop of Canterbury. Morton was then effectively given carte blanche to set up a spy and surveillance network which would report directly to the king and the king alone.

Henry had spies throughout Europe and also at home and these agents of the king were instructed to keep a close eye on those who might pose a threat. This spy network was especially helpful to the first Tudor king in the case of Perkin Warbeck, as it meant that Henry knew of the pretender's whereabouts and who his supporters were, and so could act accordingly. Indeed, it was through this network that he learned that William Stanley – whose army had effectively won him the crown at Bosworth – was plotting with traitors and so he was executed and his vast estates went to the king. Henry's spy network played a key role in enabling him to stay on the throne.

of the king's refusal to loosen his grip on government. Over a decade into his reign and with Warbeck dead, he now focused more attention on matters outside of the realm and looked to further legitimise his dynasty.

Marriage alliances were a formidable diplomatic tool and Henry needed to find a bride for Arthur. He favoured a union with a Spanish princess, thereby uniting two enemies of France, and as far back as 1489 (when Arthur was just three) the Treaty of Medina del Campo had betrothed the young prince to Catherine, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. By the time of Warbeck's death, Arthur was nearing the age when he could marry and so preparations for the lavish wedding began.

On 14 November 1501, the two were married by the archbishop of Canterbury in St Paul's Cathedral. This was a momentous occasion for Henry; the wedding legitimised his rule, as it meant a foreign power such as Spain saw him as the true king and ensured that his dynasty would continue long after his death. The lavish two-week wedding celebrations turned London into a party city.

Henry's joy would be short-lived, though. Mere months later, Arthur contracted an illness and died, something that caused an immense political impact. Worse would come for Henry when in 1503, Elizabeth died nine days after childbirth, with the baby also not surviving. Many had supported Henry out of loyalty to Elizabeth, and with her joining Arthur in the grave, it seemed that the king's crown was slipping through his fingers.

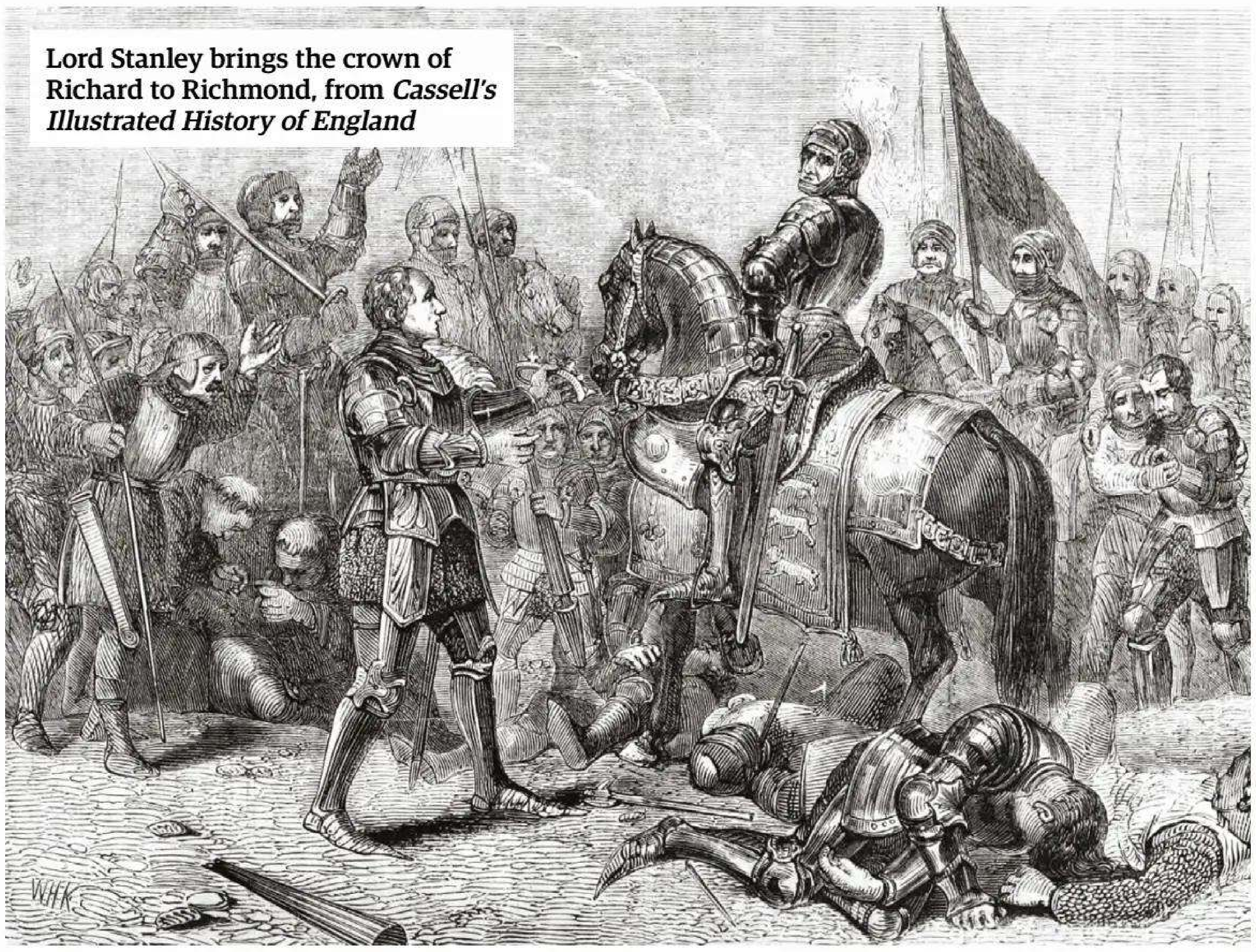
Henry could not contain his grief and shut himself away for six weeks. He was mentally and physically exhausted, but when he returned to normal government life, he was even more ruthless than before. He saw conspiracy theories everywhere and decided that if his subjects would not love him, they would fear him.

He used a series of large financial bonds on leading citizens and merchants to ensure their good behaviour - for many the cost of betraying the king became financially impossible - as well as the Council Learned in the Law, possibly the most notorious expression of his rule. This council had unprecedented powers and was answerable only to the king. It could overrule normal legal proceedings to look at any cases it wished and was not above extorting money, either as a punishment or simply to swell the king's coffers. From 1503, the council was run efficiently and ruthlessly by Edmund Dudley, who later wrote that the king wanted "many persons in danger at his pleasure… bound to his grace for great sums of money".

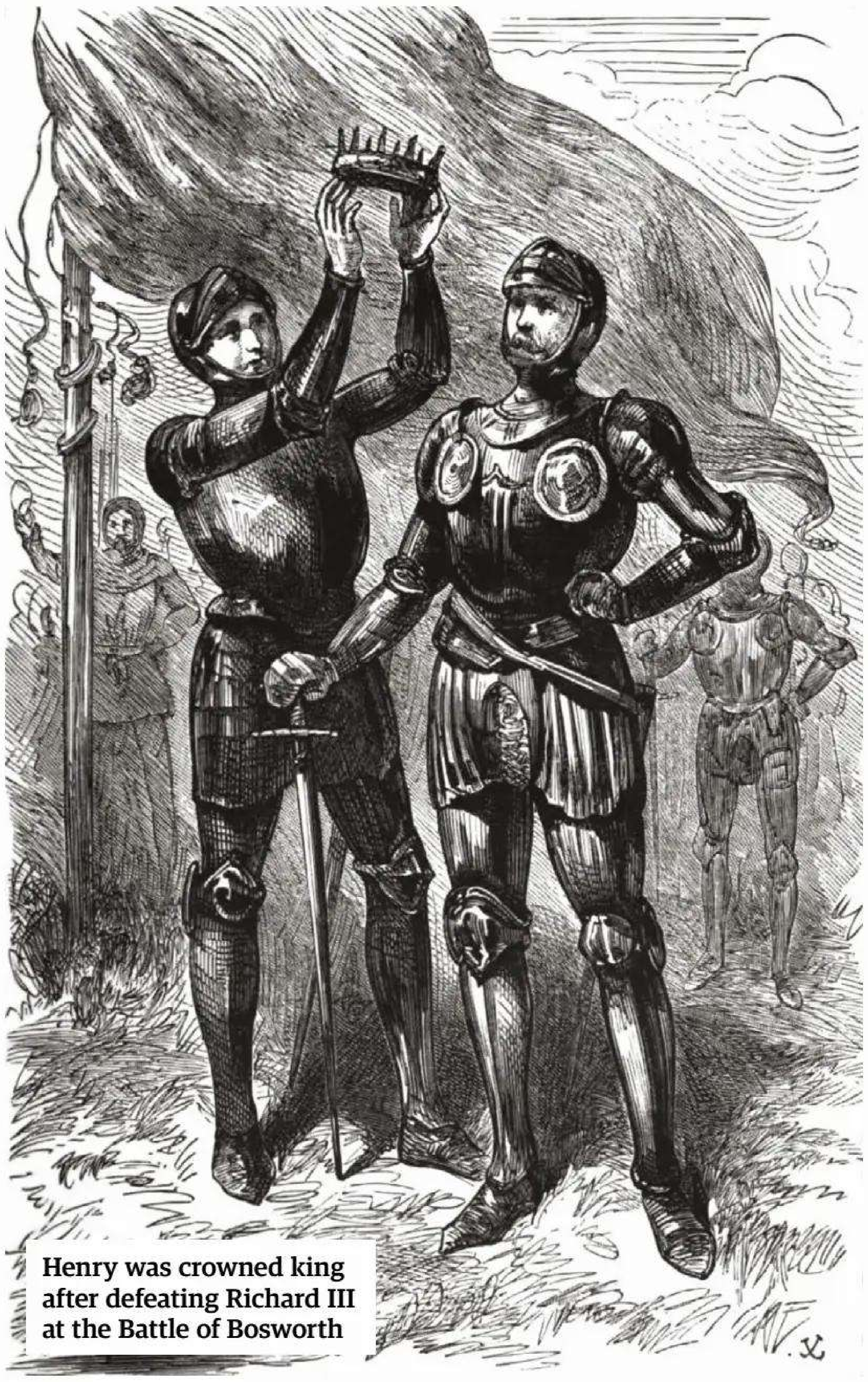
Genuine fear and unease swept the country, but Henry's dynasty was further secured thanks to a stroke of outrageous good fortune: in 1506 a ship carrying Philip the Fair of Burgundy was shipwrecked in England. Henry ensured Philip had everything he wanted at the royal court, but through this thin veneer it was clear that Philip was effectively a prisoner until he agreed to release to Henry's care the Duke of Suffolk, who had been agitating on the Continent for a rebellion in England. Philip agreed and when the boat containing Suffolk arrived, he was promptly escorted to the Tower of London.

In his last few years, Henry became increasingly ill and withdrawn. All eyes turned to his son and heir, Henry, who seemed to be very different from his father - the young prince was a fine physical specimen interested in honour and chivalry. After his father's paranoid regime, people were looking forward to a more traditional king, but if it hadn't been for Henry VII's shrewd actions, there would have been no crown to pass down. When the king was fading fast in 1509, he could reflect on a job well done: after spending much of his early life on the run, he had won the English crown and held onto it.

> *"His keen mind immediately grasped how important appearances were; it was not enough to just be a king – he had to look, act and sound like a king"*



Lord Stanley brings the crown of Richard to Richmond, from *Cassell's Illustrated History of England*



Henry was crowned king after defeating Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth

Images Lambetz Falera/CC BY-SA 3.0 (coin)

THE CORRUPTION OF HENRY VIII

How the Tudor king went from Renaissance prince to bloodsoaked tyrant

Words **Emily Staniforth**

Remembered as the monarch with six wives who broke away from the Catholic Church, Henry VIII's reputation has been cemented as a result of his outrageous behaviour and bloody-minded approach to kingship. At the beginning of his reign, Henry embodied the ideal of an enlightened Renaissance prince who presided over a majestic court and could have taken England into a new golden age after years of uncertainty. So how did it all go wrong, and why did Henry VIII become memorialised as England's most tyrannical monarch?

A HUMANIST PRINCE

When Henry VII won the Battle of Bosworth and became King of England in 1485, he needed to secure his throne. It was important that his sons were raised to be capable and well-prepared to defend the Tudor throne, and he was eager to provide the best education for Arthur (born 1486) and Henry (born 1491). As the ideals of the Italian Renaissance spread across the continent, so did a new way of learning. Humanism was a system of education pioneered by Italian academics and philosophers that revolved around the revival of ancient knowledge from Greece and Rome. It stressed the importance of eloquent writing and rhetoric, giving rise to a writing style that came to be characteristic of the Renaissance period. In Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus, humanism found its leading light. He wrote in his work *The Education Of A Christian Prince* (1516) that "no commonwealth can be happy unless either philosophers are put at the helm, or those to whose lot the rule happens to have fallen embrace philosophy". Propounded by the emerging humanists of Henry VII's reign, this belief in education as a vital tool of modern rulership saw humanist educators employed at European courts to teach the next generation of monarchs. In England, King Henry adopted the practice and had his sons educated to the highest humanist standards.

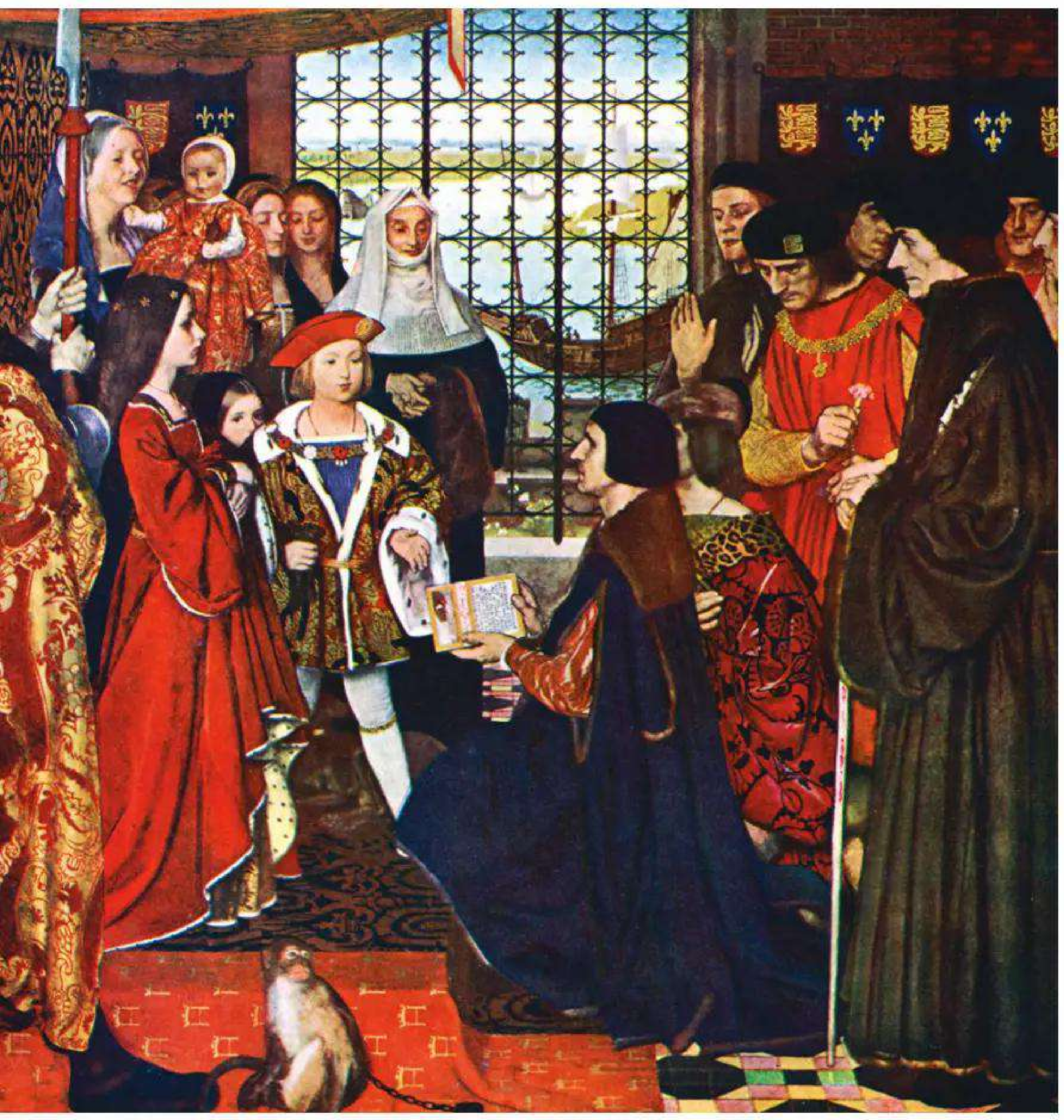
As the heir, Arthur was separated from his younger siblings and raised in an environment where he could prepare for kingship. He was moved at the age of six to Ludlow Castle in Wales to begin his royal education.

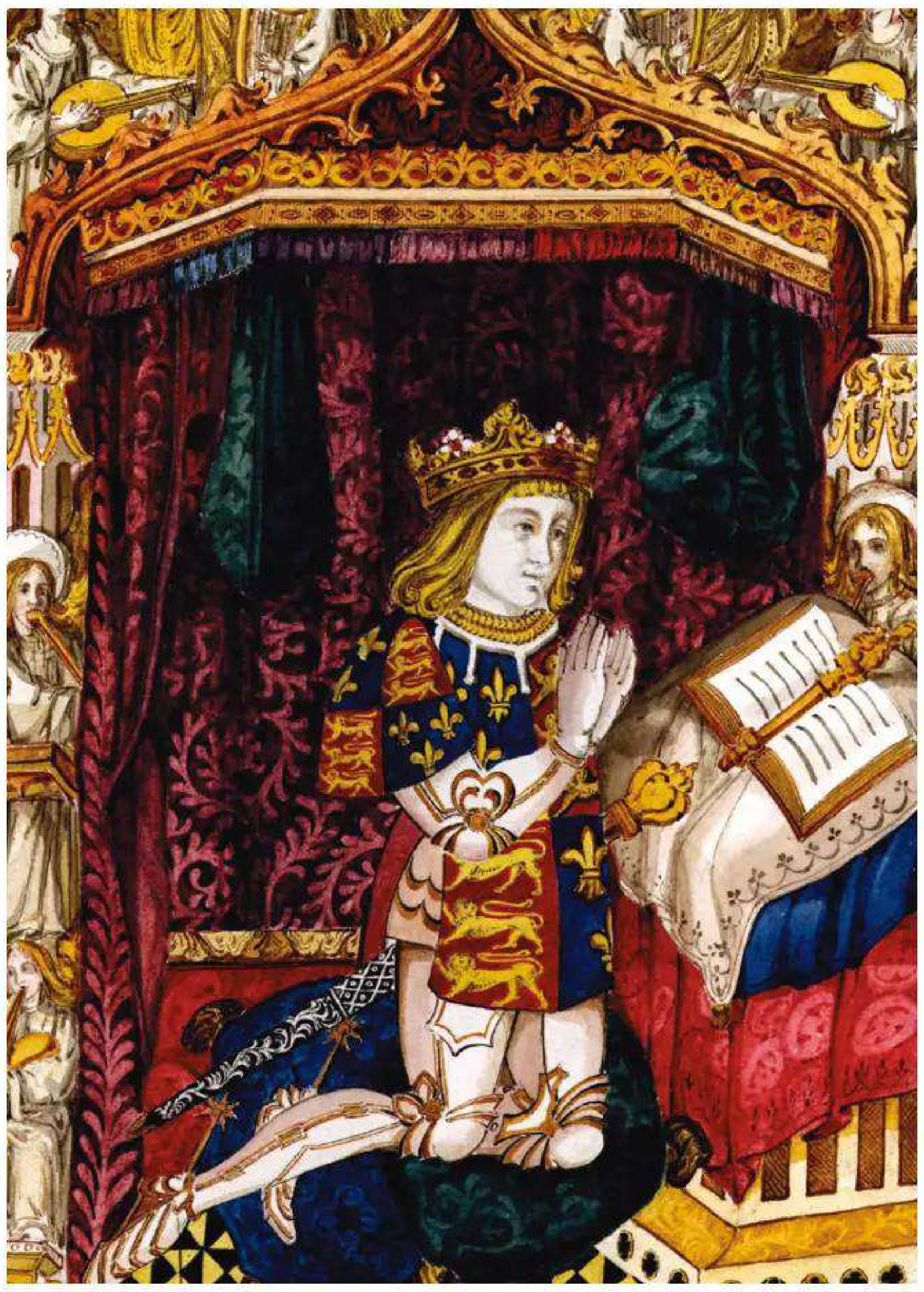
EXPERT BIO

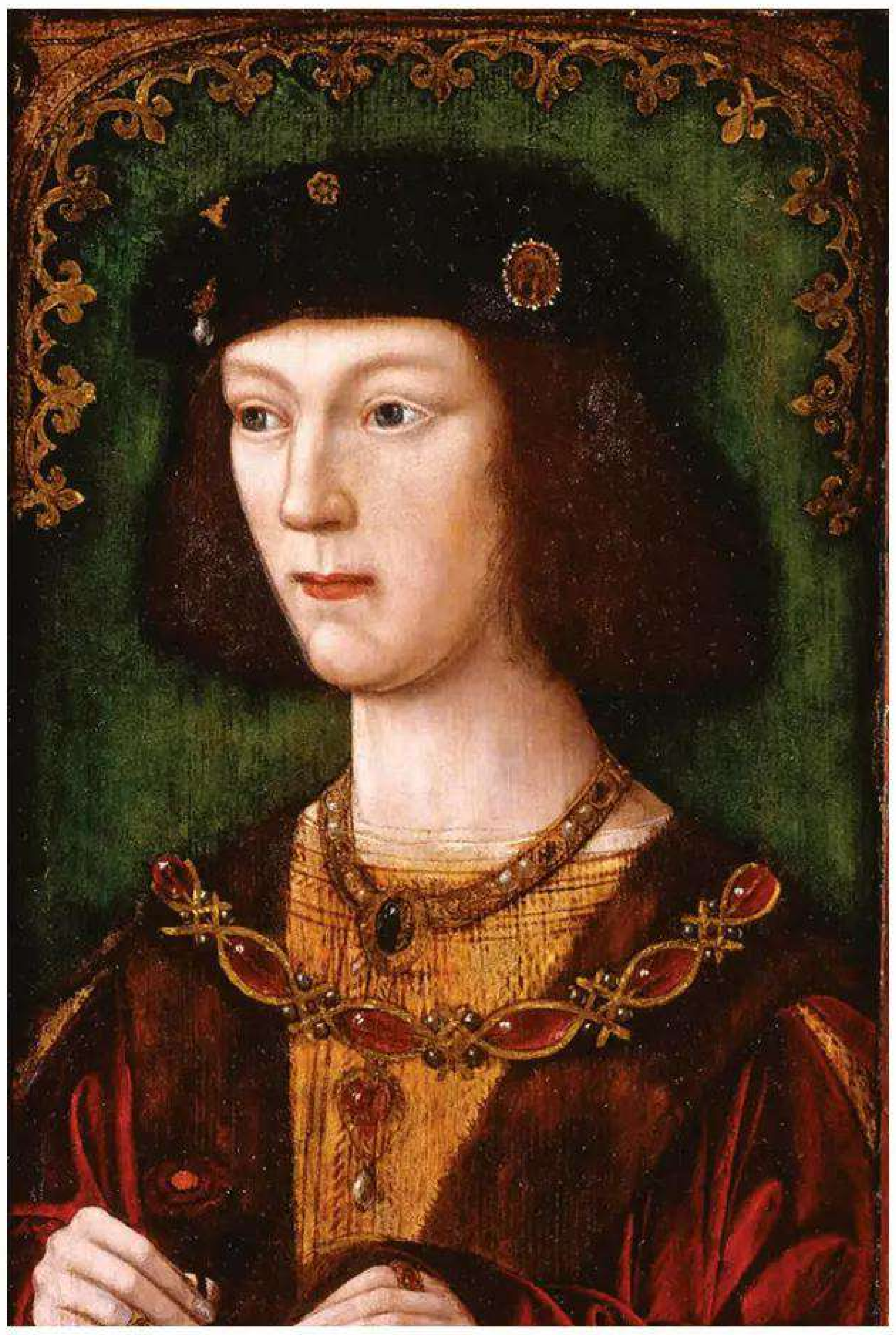
GLENN RICHARDSON

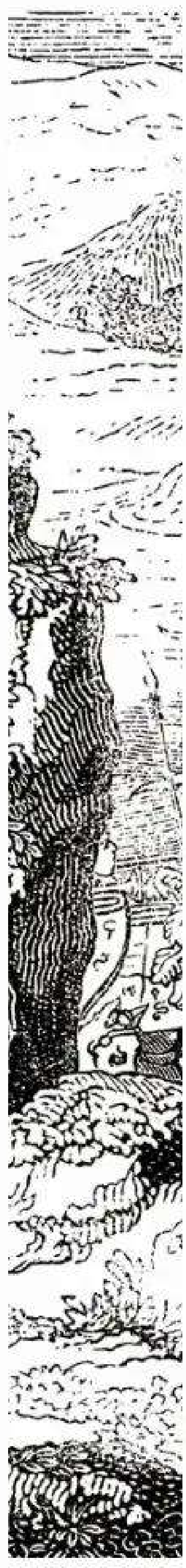
Glenn Richardson is a Professor of Early Modern History at St Mary's University, London. He specialises in Tudor politics and is the author of *Wolsey* (Routledge Press, 2020).

Illustration Joe Cummings **Image** Glenn Richardson







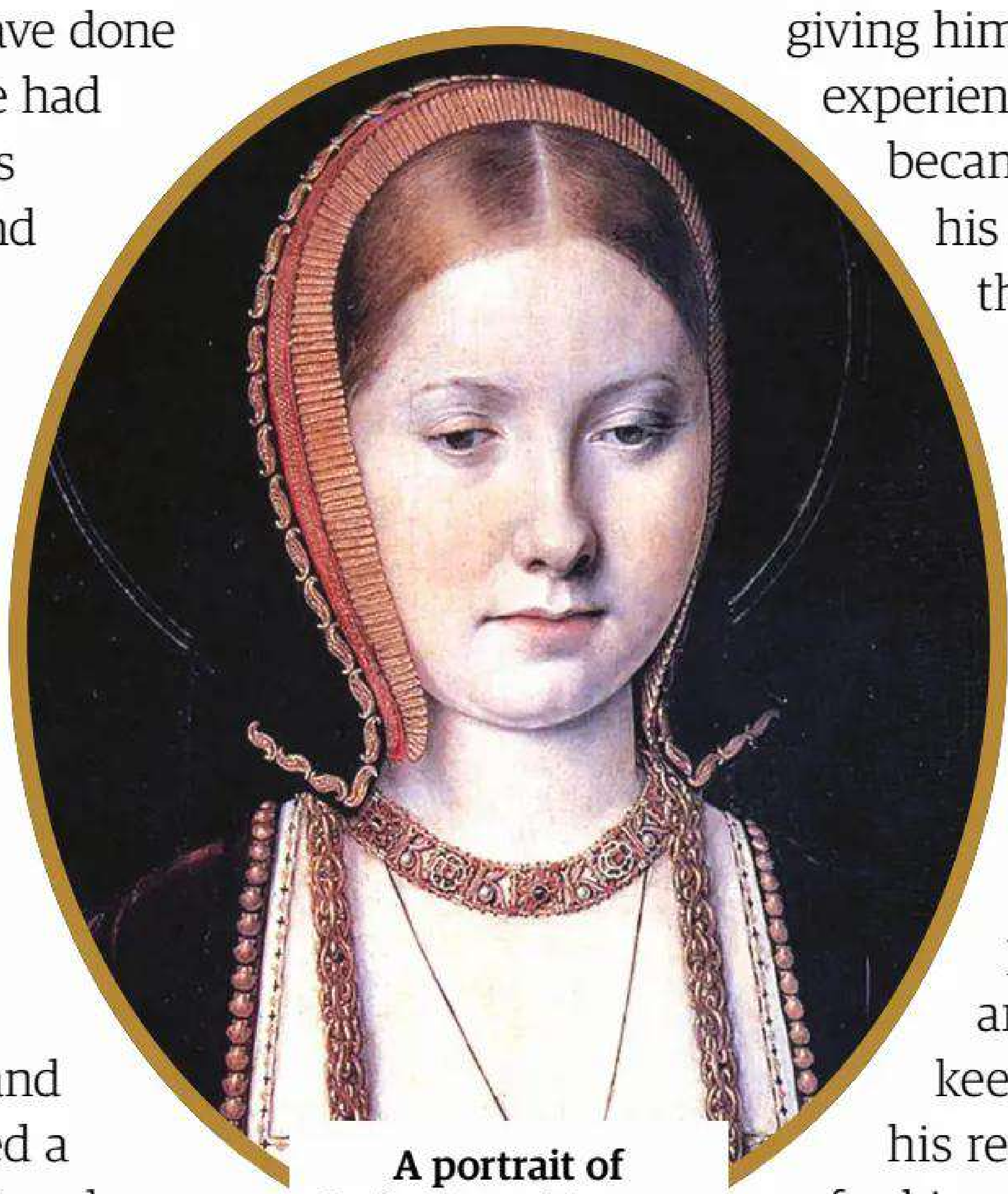


Meanwhile, Henry was educated while living with his mother and sisters at Eltham Palace. Little is known about Henry's education as the spare son, but he did have access to some of Europe's leading humanists. His first tutor, the poet-laureate John Skelton, was credited by Erasmus with introducing humanism to England. Under Skelton's tutelage, Henry excelled in his classical studies and became a dedicated scholar. "He [studied] elements, at least, of what later became called humanities: languages, particularly Latin and Greek, and probably some history. He liked stories about Henry V, who was the great English King of the Hundred Years' War," says historian Glenn Richardson. "He would also have done bits of geography. As a man he had an interest in all kinds of maps and scientific instruments… and I think in general terms he was pretty well educated for a nobleman." In 1499, Henry was visited by Erasmus when the scholar was staying in England as a guest of Tudor courtier Thomas More. Erasmus was impressed with the young prince's ability to converse in Latin and French and the initial meeting made such an impression on both Erasmus and Henry, that the pair maintained a connection into Henry's adulthood.

ABOVE-LEFT Erasmus presents a tribute to Prince Henry on his visit with Thomas More

ABOVE Henry VII's first son, Arthur, was educated in how to prepare for kingship

ABOVE-RIGHT A portrait of young Henry by an unknown artist



A portrait of Catherine of Aragon

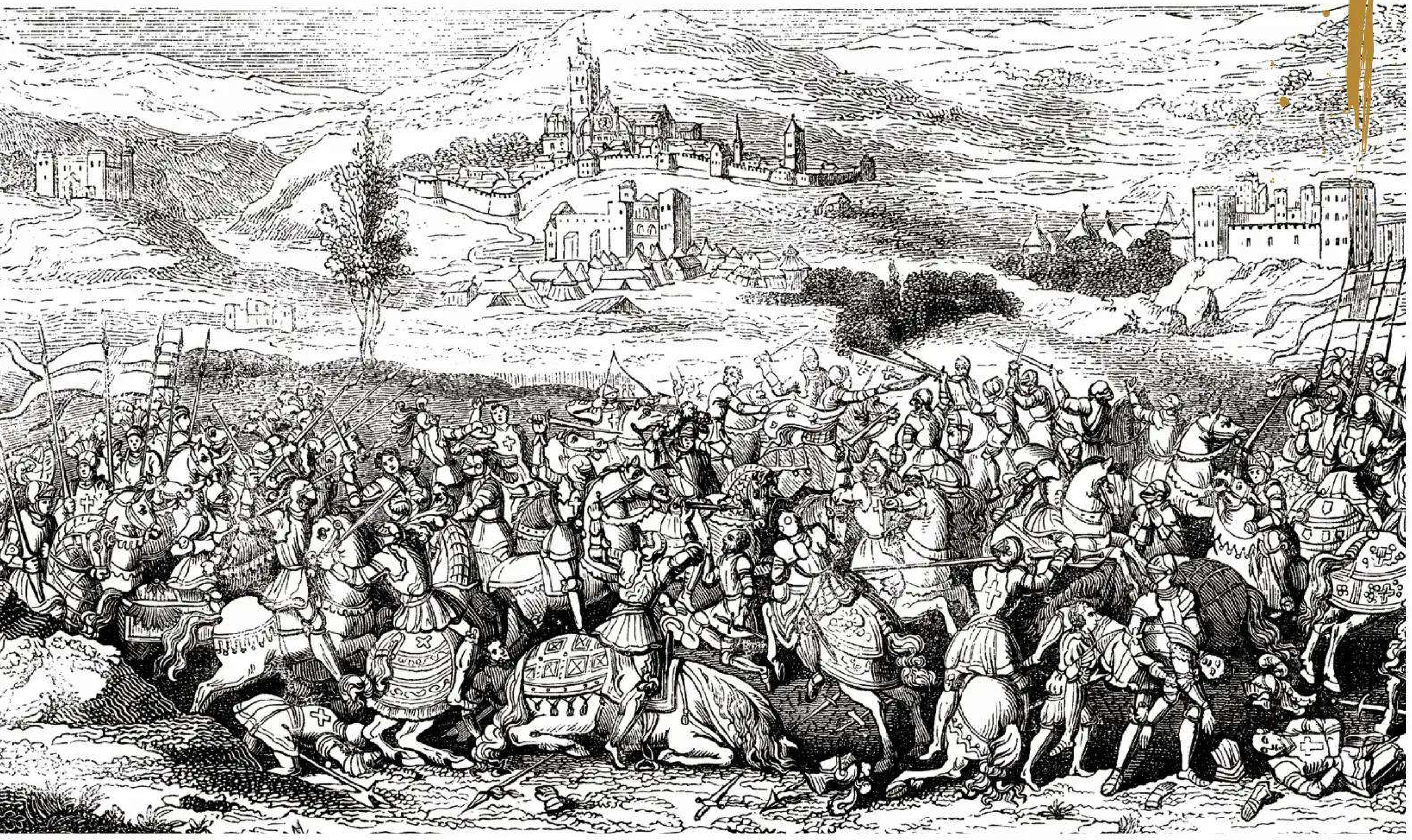
To ensure that the young prince was a well-rounded individual, Henry's education also extended to sports. "He certainly had the training in the physical sports of hunting and jousting," explains Richardson. However, when disaster struck in 1502 and Henry's brother Arthur died, possibly of tuberculosis. Henry VII made sure that his second son, now the heir to the throne, avoided dangerous sporting pursuits. Instead, Henry was only allowed to participate in sports in a performative capacity that would keep him out of harm's way.

Unlike Arthur, Henry was not given the experience of ruling over his own court. At Ludlow, Arthur had the opportunity to replicate his father's court, giving him some valuable hands-on experience of rulership. When Henry became the heir, he had to learn at his father's court with the help of the King's councillors.

His training continued after Henry VII died in 1509, and he inherited his father's Council. "[The Council] see it as their job to continue the training of this young king," says Richardson. "Henry is a very gregarious, fairly generous, kind-natured person at this point in his life and it's the Council's duty to keep an eye on him so he begins his reign very much still in training for kingship."

THE YOUNG KING

Armed with an education fit for a Renaissance monarch, Henry VIII should have been well-equipped to handle kingship. One of his first decisions was to marry his brother's widow, the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon. This match had been on the cards for several years, with the pair being betrothed shortly after Arthur's death. Despite the Pope granting a special dispensation to allow the marriage, a tense relationship developed between Henry VII and Ferdinand of Aragon, Catherine's father, and the engagement was called off. Now the king, it was vital that Henry choose a bride and as a young man, he was quite the catch. Handsome, charming and at just over six feet tall he towered over the average Tudor man. He was lean, strong and athletic, and thanks to his father's frugality, extremely rich. Henry could have chosen any wife he pleased and while Catherine was a beautiful woman, she was six years older than him, making the choice an unusual one. Henry's decision to keep his promise to Catherine shows that he genuinely loved her. A commitment to the chivalric ideals of early modern European kingship may also have played a part in his decision, but Henry took his betrothal to Catherine seriously. Their marriage provided the new king with a highly educated, intelligent and politically astute queen, who matched his personality and intellect well.



ABOVE The Battle of the Spurs in 1513 saw Henry fight (and win) against the French

> *"Henry is a very gregarious, fairly generous, kind-natured person at this point in his life"*

Aside from his marriage, Henry's priorities in the first few years of his reign were heavily influenced by his desire to emulate his idol, Henry V. In 1513, he led an army across the Channel in his first foray into war. Successfully capturing the towns of Thérouanne and Tournai, this marked the start of a long rivalry between England and France that would span across Henry's entire reign. He had begun to prove himself as both an intelligent monarch and a warrior king.

In contrast to his father's court, Henry presided over a magnificent establishment. He patronised artists, poets and scholars, committed to building works like St James's Palace, and spent money on lavish displays of wealth and power. The English people celebrated the accession of their virile young king. However, foreboding glimpses of Henry's ruthlessness showed themselves early on. Just days after his father's death, the new king had the chief administrators of Henry VII's reign arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley were charged with treason and accused of assembling forces to "hold, guide and govern the king and his Council". Most historians agree that the charges were fabricated and that Henry wanted someone to blame for his father's unpopular financial policies. In his quest to be popular with his subjects, Henry ordered the execution of the pair in 1510, showing that he was willing to do what he needed to maintain his authority.

DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

While Henry is remembered for severing England's ties with Rome, it is often forgotten that he once had a strong relationship with the papacy. When Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses to a church door at Wittenberg in October 1517, it began the Protestant Reformation. Luther's doctrine spoke out against the Church asking for payment, known as 'indulgences', in return for the forgiveness of sins. With the papacy thrown into a crisis, it was Henry who jumped to the Catholic Church's defence.

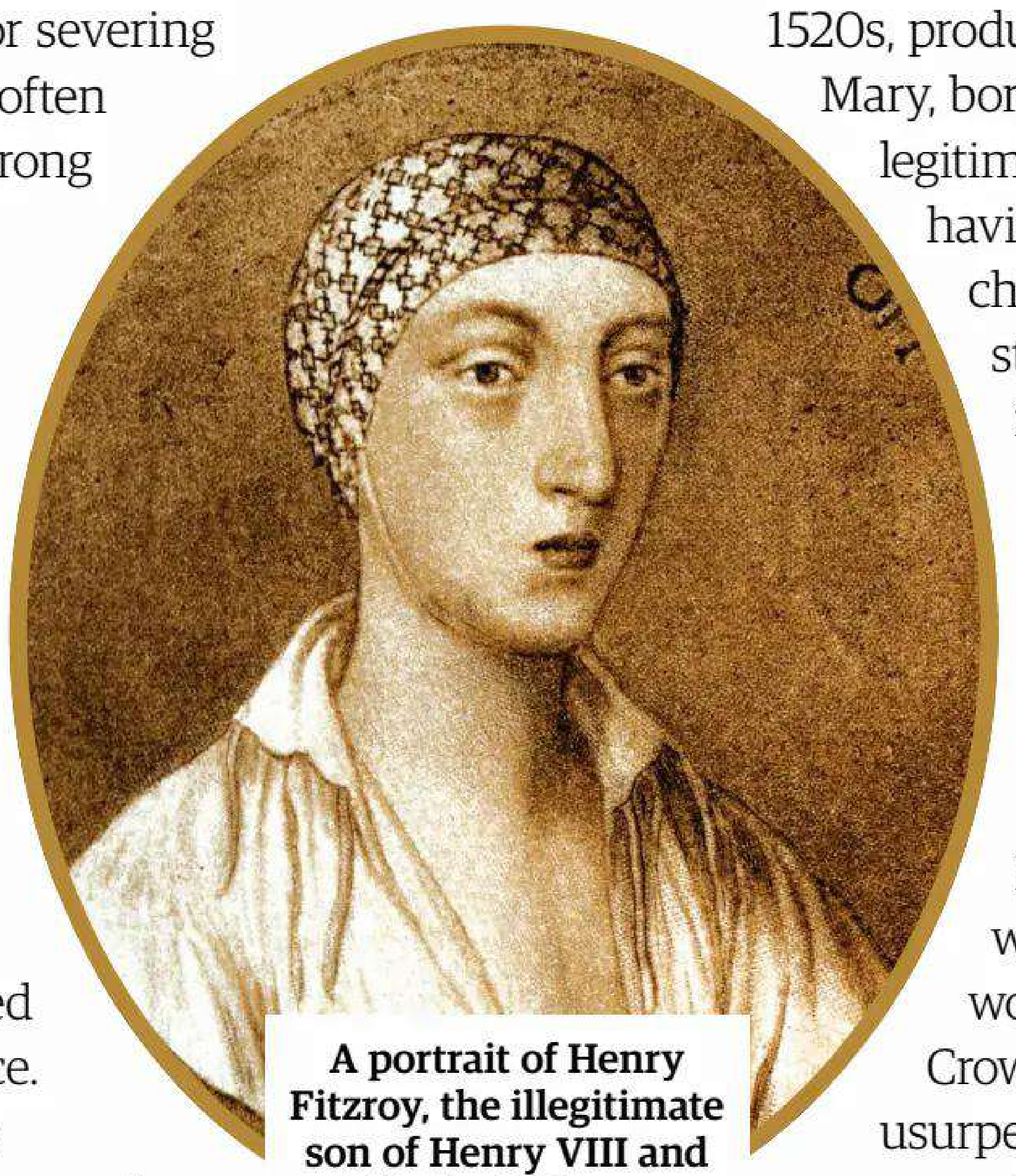
Possibly with the help of his closest advisors, Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas More, Henry drew upon his humanist education and literary ability to pen *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* (*Defence of the Seven Sacraments*), waging a war of words upon Luther when it was published in 1521. In his treatise, Henry argued for papal supremacy within the Church and the defence of Catholic religious practices, while disparaging Luther's beliefs and his character, describing him as a serpent and a disease. Having had the work presented and dedicated to Pope Leo X before its publication, Henry was rewarded for his support and granted the title Defender of the Faith.

As a staunch Catholic who publicly championed the papacy, it seemed unlikely that Henry's relationship with Rome would ever sour.

THE GREAT MATTER

So, with everything going well for Henry, why do we not remember him as the magnificent king he was at the start of his reign? There is one simple reason – Henry needed a legitimate son. The matter of succession became pressing as it looked likely that Catherine would not give him the son he desperately desired. When Henry became king, he had been the first one to inherit the crown peacefully in nearly 100 years. To avoid potential threats to the Tudor dynasty, he needed to produce a male heir. "It's beginning to worry [Henry] that they should have had more children by now," explains Richardson. "Henry is really worried about the future because being a patriarchal monarch of the 16th century, he doesn't really believe that women are capable, ideally, of ruling." His marriage to Catherine had, by the late 1520s, produced only one child. Princess Mary, born in 1516, was Henry's sole legitimate child, with Catherine having given birth to at least six children, all of whom were stillborn or had died in early infancy. Henry considered what he must do to secure his dynasty.

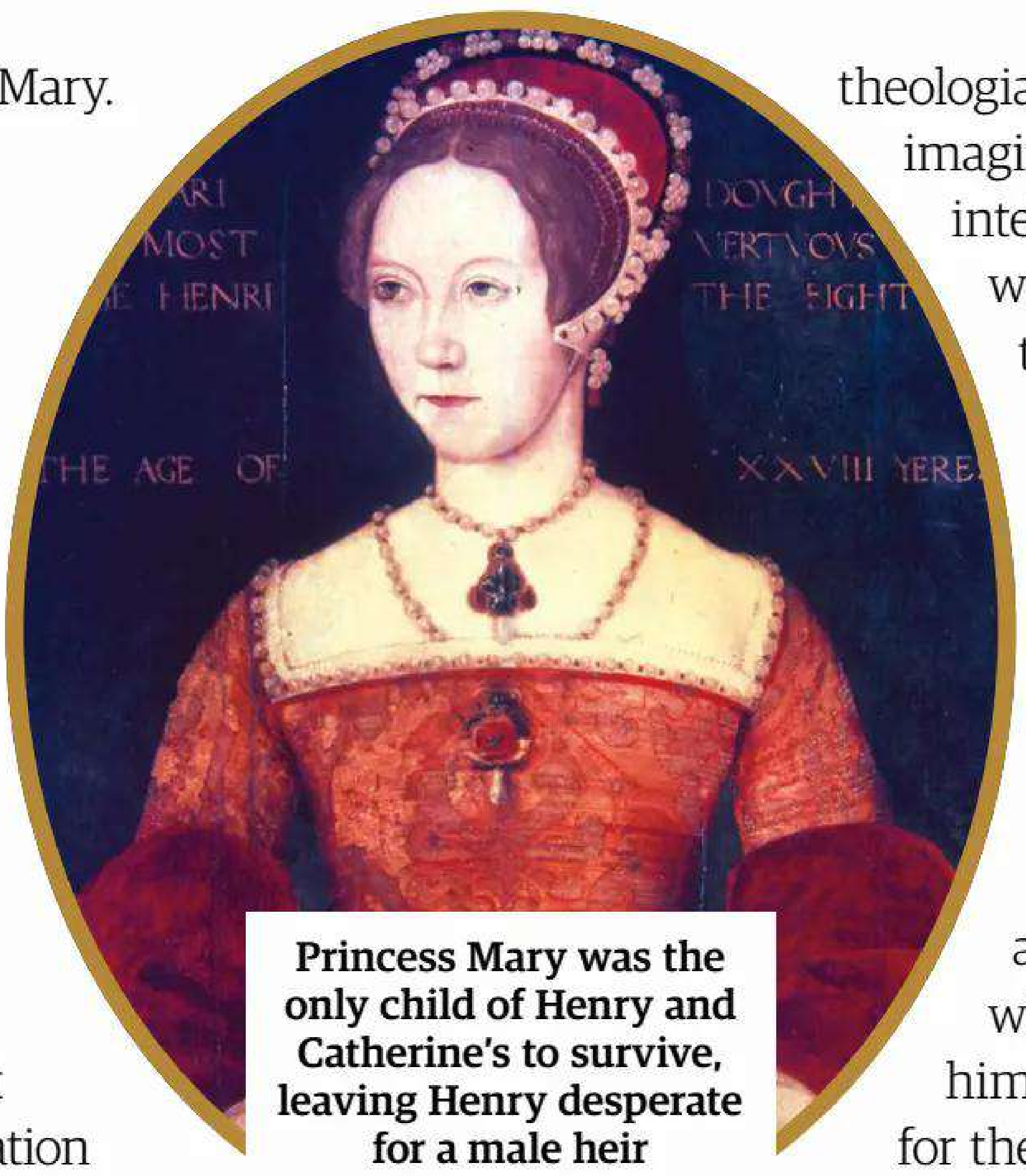
One possible solution to Henry's conundrum was to make his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, his heir. However, as a bastard, Fitzroy was not a stable choice and would have put the Tudor Crown at risk from potential usurpers. A second shocking option was considered, which involved the



A portrait of Henry Fitzroy, the illegitimate son of Henry VIII and Elizabeth Blount

Images Alamy, Getty Images

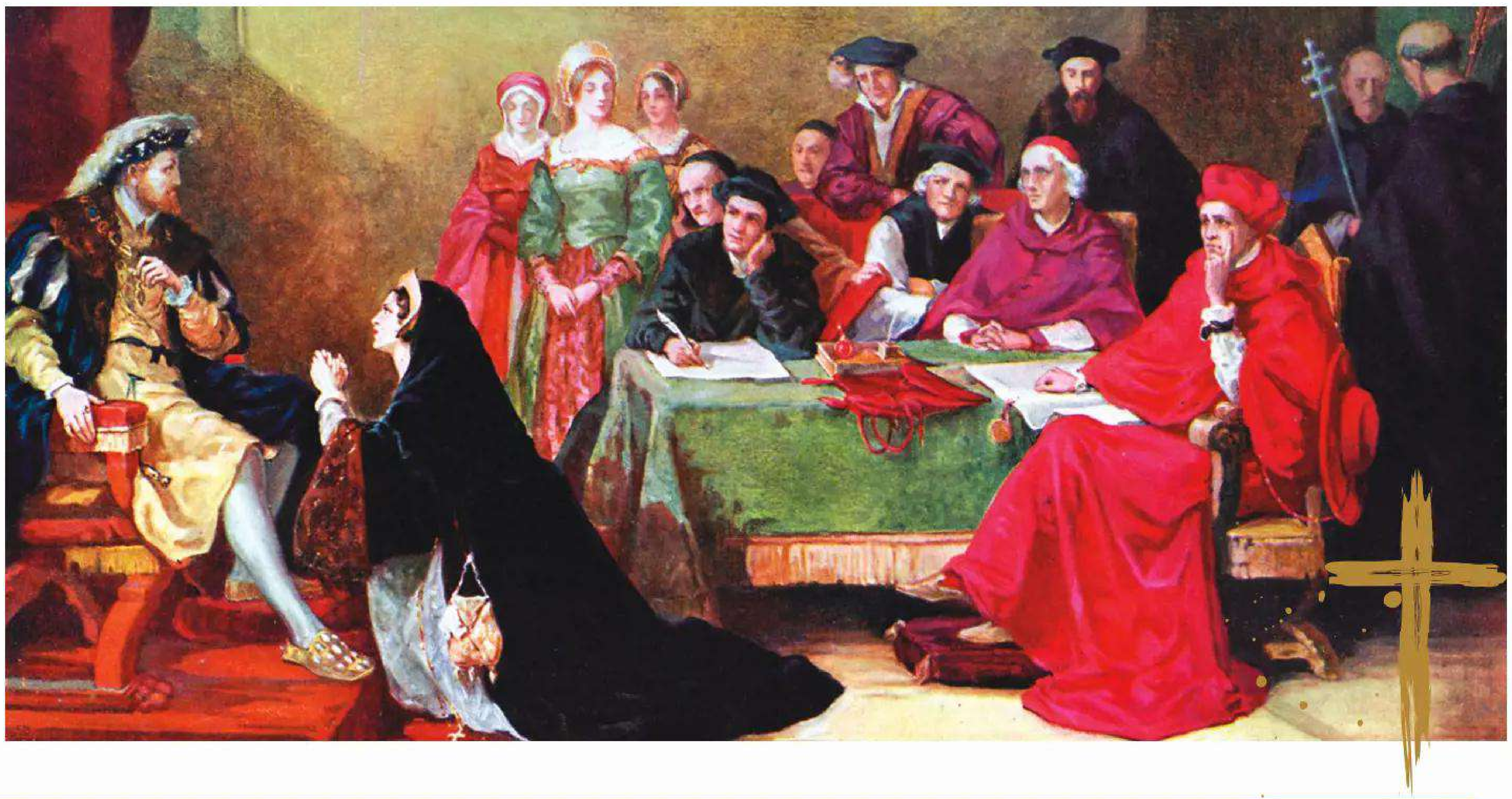
betrothal of Fitzroy to Princess Mary. With neither of these options deemed viable, the older wife that Henry had once been so determined to marry became his greatest obstacle, and he could only see one solution. In 1527, Henry asked Pope Clement VII to annul his marriage on the grounds that there was a possibility Catherine had consummated her first marriage to Arthur. If this was true, then the pair should never have married. "There was talk at the time that it was tricky to get the dispensation to allow a brother of the deceased to marry that brother's widow. Even at the time, people wondered whether it was a good idea, but [the Pope] gave the dispensation to allow it to go ahead, so that's what Catherine relied on. That and the fact she maintained to her death, even in public court, that she had married Henry as a virgin," says Richardson.



Princess Mary was the only child of Henry and Catherine's to survive, leaving Henry desperate for a male heir

Henry argued that their failure to have a son was punishment from God for the marriage, as the Book of Leviticus states that "if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing… they shall be childless". Whether Henry believed this, or he was using the convenient biblical text to obtain his divorce, is greatly debated. "I think [Henry] probably saw an opportunity. He was a great amateur theologian, he had a very fertile imagination and was a reasonably intelligent guy, so he would have worked out quite quickly that there was an argument, at least, that could be made," says Richardson. Despite Henry's, and Wolsey's, reasoning, Pope Clement stood his ground and refused the annulment. "[Henry's] sense of his kingship was very strong and he couldn't understand why such a good boy like him, who had done everything for the papacy, couldn't get this Pope to give him what he saw as his due, and why the papacy was somehow preventing him from being the king he really needed to be," explains Richardson.

Also, Henry's dealings with the Pope over 'The Great Matter' were not fully transparent. In 1526, Henry became infatuated with the young and beautiful Anne Boleyn. Anne refused to become Henry's mistress, making Henry intent on marrying her. Getting nowhere with the divorce, Henry dismissed Catherine from his court in 1531 and in January 1533 he entered into a bigamous marriage with Anne, bypassing the Pope. His first marriage was annulled by the Archbishop of Canterbury five months later. Henry's



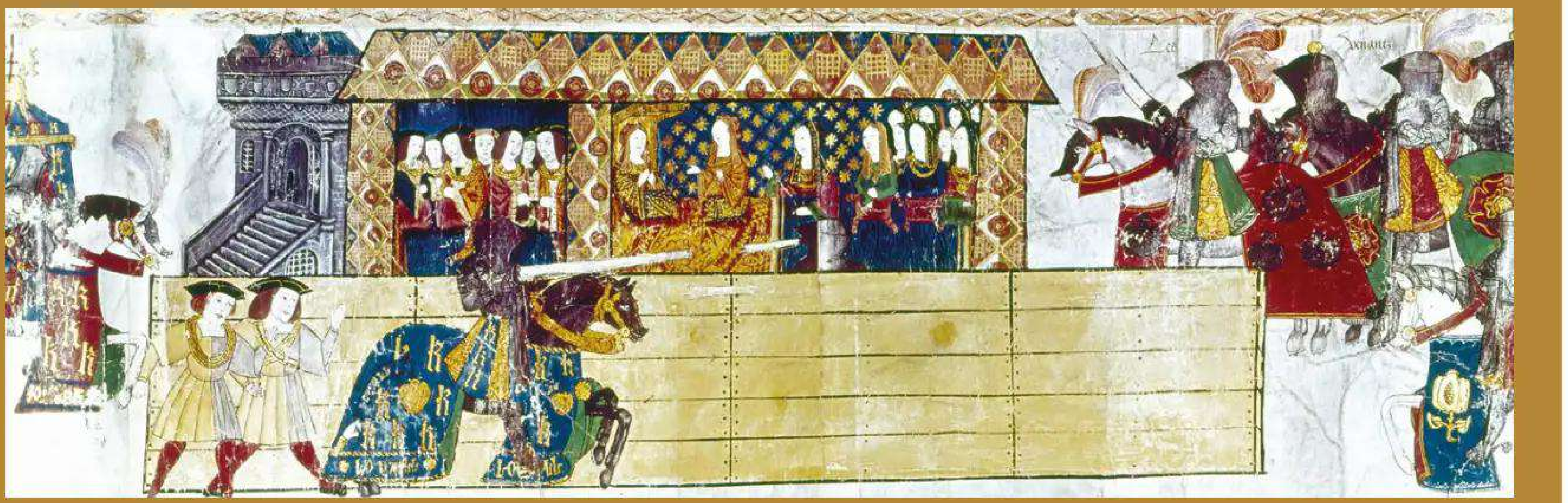
AN INJURED KING

Did a jousting accident change Henry's personality?

Henry VIII was a keen jouster who loved to display his talents and athleticism. Yet, in 1524, the dangers of the sport caught up with him when he was badly injured in a competition with Charles Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk. This experience did not hamper the king's desire to joust, though, and 12 years later another catastrophe may have changed the course of Henry's life, as well as English history.

While taking part in a jousting event on 24 January 1536, Henry VIII was involved in a devastating accident. Falling from his steed, the 44-year-old king became trapped under the horse. It is believed that Henry may have been unconscious for up to two hours after he hit his head in the fall, with some historians speculating that a brain injury sustained in this accident may have resulted in a dramatic change in his personality. The king's violent outbursts of anger have been put down to suspected brain damage by those who believe in this theory, and his decision to execute Anne Boleyn only a few months after the accident of 1536 can be seen to evidence this argument. However, Alison Weir refutes this: "There's this very weird theory, based on a very poor source, that he had a fall from his horse in 1536 and he suffered brain damage and his character changed. No, it did not change. It was a gradual change. You can see it coming through those years of the Great Matter, as the divorce was called, and so I don't believe that Henry's character changed suddenly."

Whether or not he had brain damage, he certainly sustained other injuries while jousting, including damage to his leg that caused recurring ulcers for the rest of his life. It is not hard to see how a once glorious sportsman could have become embittered and frustrated with his weak health, and how these feelings may have presented themselves in other matters.



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patience with Rome had run out, and he dissolved England's ties with the Catholic Church and established the Church of England, of which he was the Supreme Head. The ramifications of Henry's desire for a son had altered the course of England's religious status forever.

HENRY THE TYRANT

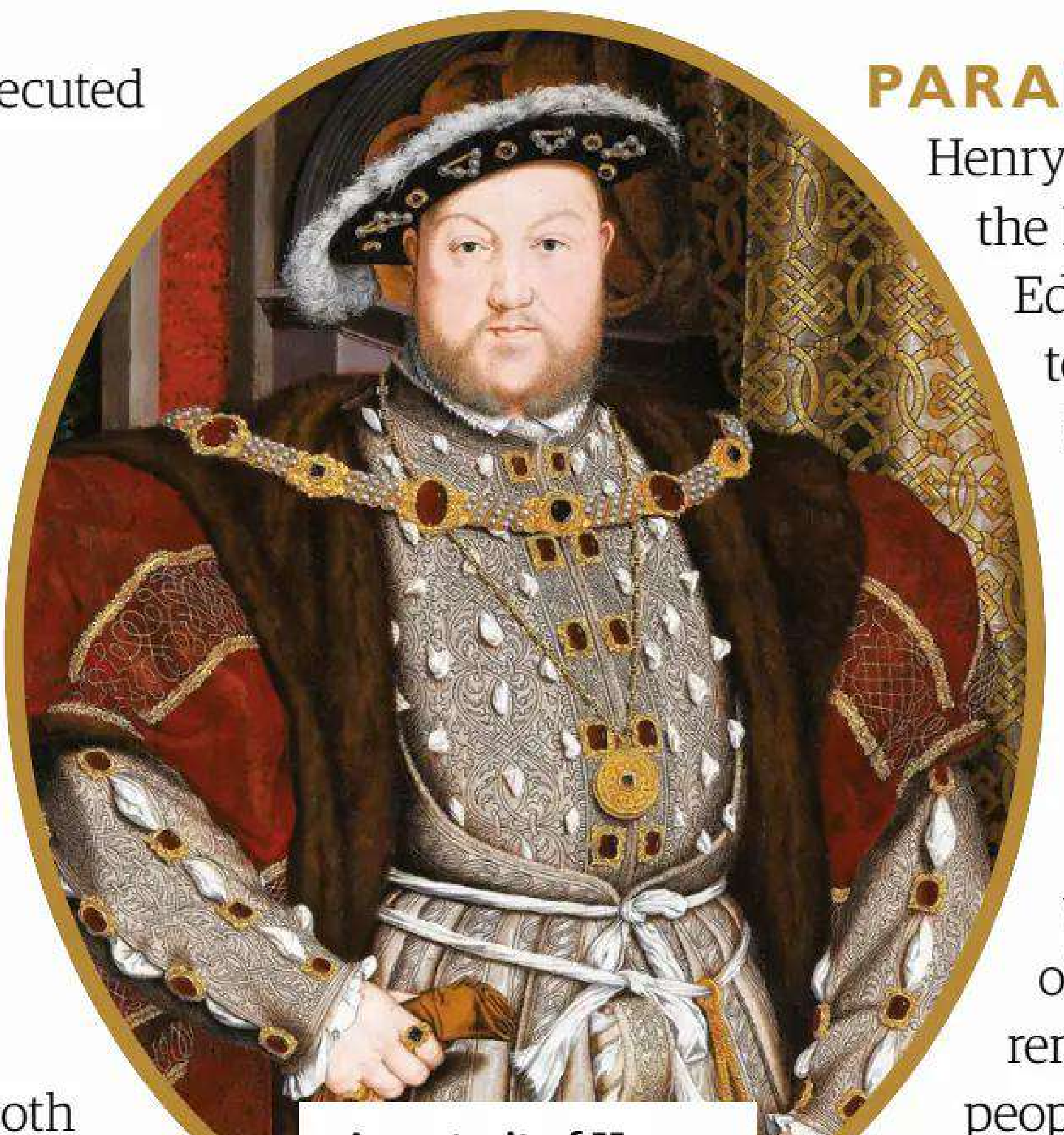
From now on, the chivalrous and charming King Henry seemingly ceased to exist. He became increasingly paranoid about threats to his authority and about having a son, with Anne producing just one healthy female child. In his efforts to secure the dynasty, Henry blamed those who he believed were in his way. After he failed to obtain the Pope's permission for annulment, Wolsey was stripped of his titles and later arrested on charges of treason, despite him being Henry's most loyal servant, friend and advisor. If Wolsey had not died from an illness on his way to face the king after his arrest, he would have likely been executed.

Statesman and writer Thomas More, Henry's closest advisor, discussed tyranny in his work *The History Of King Richard III* in allusion to Henry's increasingly ruthless behaviour as he observed his potential for despotism. More was sentenced to death after refusing to sign the Act of Supremacy that recognised Henry as the head of the Church of England and was executed in 1535. Henry's penchant for executing his political advisors did not end there, with Thomas Cromwell (More's successor as Henry's right-hand man) put to death in 1540. It is estimated that during his reign, Henry had approximately 57,000 people executed.

The most infamous examples of Henry's tyranny were the executions of his wives Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, who were both accused of adultery and treason. Whether or not they were guilty, Henry showed little mercy to his queens - a far cry from the chivalrous young prince he once was.

In terms of his religious policy, he spent much of his reign after the Break with Rome persecuting those who disagreed with his supremacy over the Church. He tore down monasteries and abbeys, using their riches to line his pockets and fund his foreign wars. By the end of his reign, the Renaissance prince had become an overweight, ill, possibly impotent, overly suspicious, old king who had squandered the riches he had inherited and destroyed the religious stability of his realm.

> "It is estimated that during his reign, Henry had approximately 57,000 people executed"



A portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Holbein the Younger

PARADOXICAL REIGN

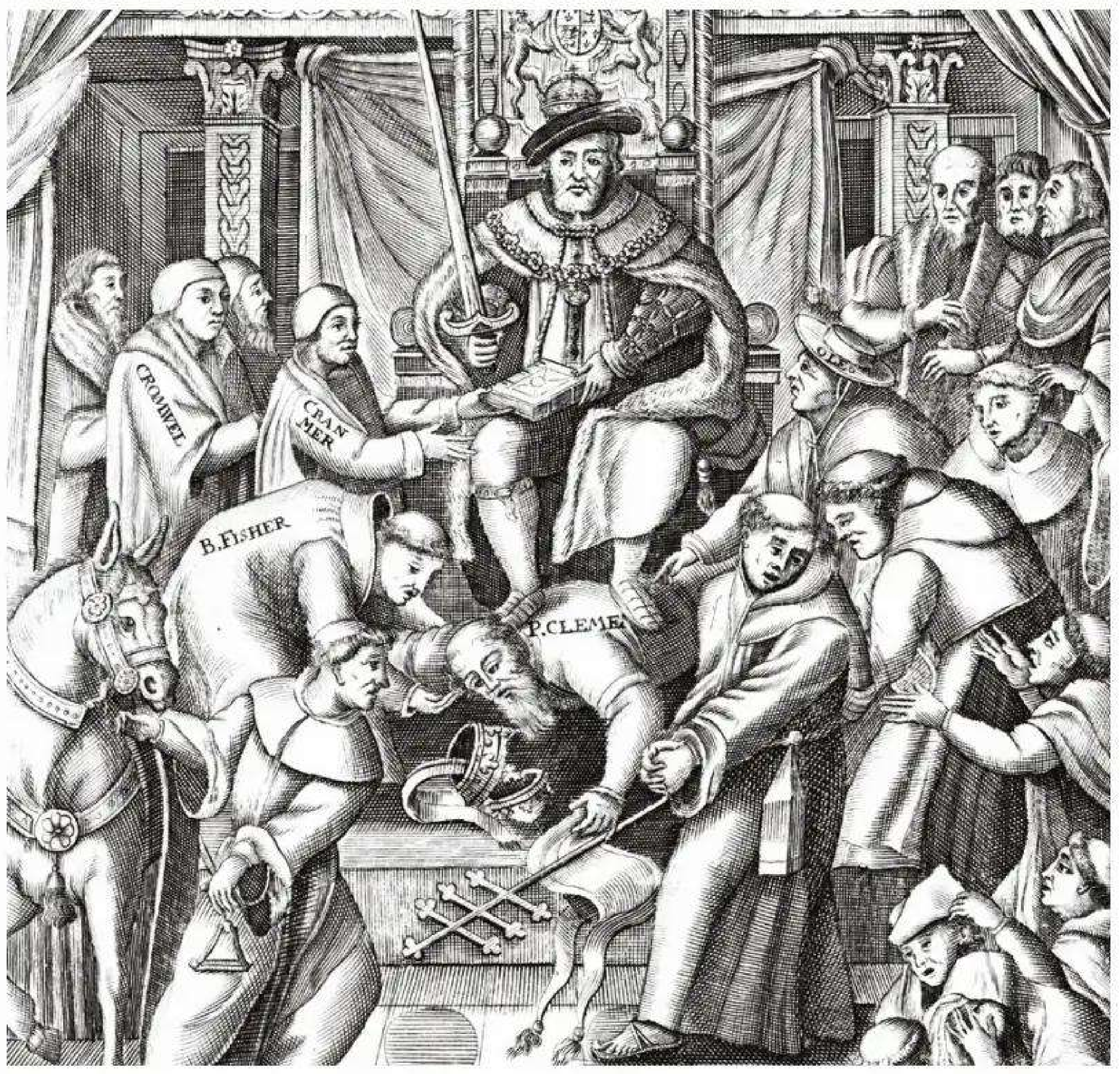
Henry died in 1547, having secured the line of succession. Prince Edward had been born in 1537 to Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, and though he was only nine when his father died, he was a clear successor. A cruel twist of fate would see Henry's longed-for son succumb to illness and die as a teenager with no children. At the time of his death, Henry was fondly remembered by the English people who, for a time, referred to him as Henry the Great, according to Richardson. This was likely due to his status as the current king's deceased father and the length of Henry's reign, which at 37 years was longer than most other monarchs of this period. Also, when compared with the bloody religious turmoil that the country was plunged into with the reigns of his children, Henry's religious policies may have been looked upon with rose-tinted glasses.

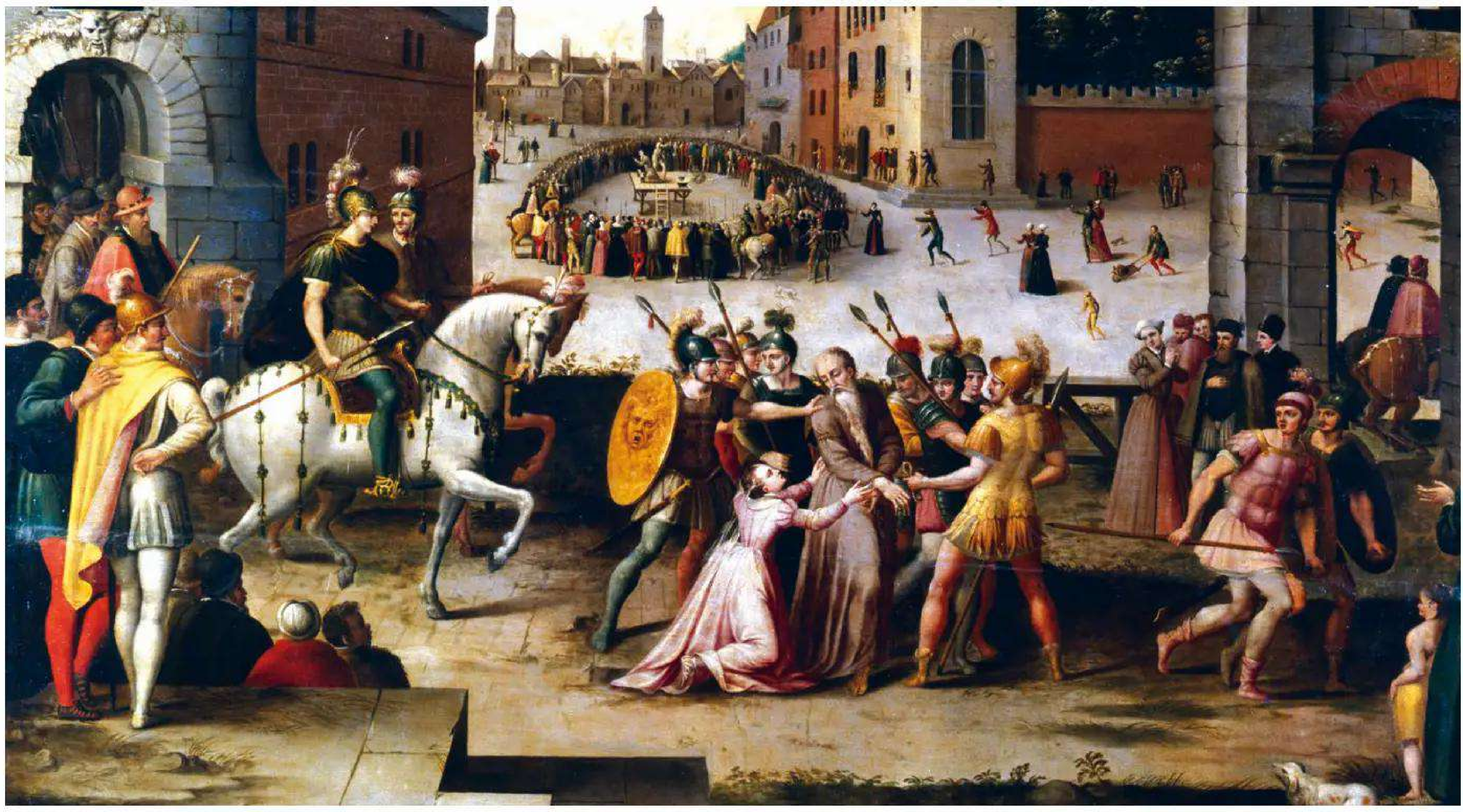
However, this does not mean the tyranny of Henry's reign was forgotten. In the centuries since his death, Henry's often despicable reign has seen him remembered as arguably the most notorious of England's kings. The paradox of Henry VIII was that a chivalrous king so quickly became a despot who was characterised by his paranoia, his desire to secure the Tudor dynasty, and his need to be respected and revered. His megalomaniac tendencies poisoned his rule and corrupted the legacy he could have had.

FAR-LEFT Catherine of Aragon defending herself against Henry's efforts to annul their marriage

BELOW-LEFT An allegorical engraving of Henry VIII trampling on Pope Clement VII

BELOW A painting of Thomas More saying goodbye to his daughter as he is taken to his execution





Aztec Empire, 1502-20

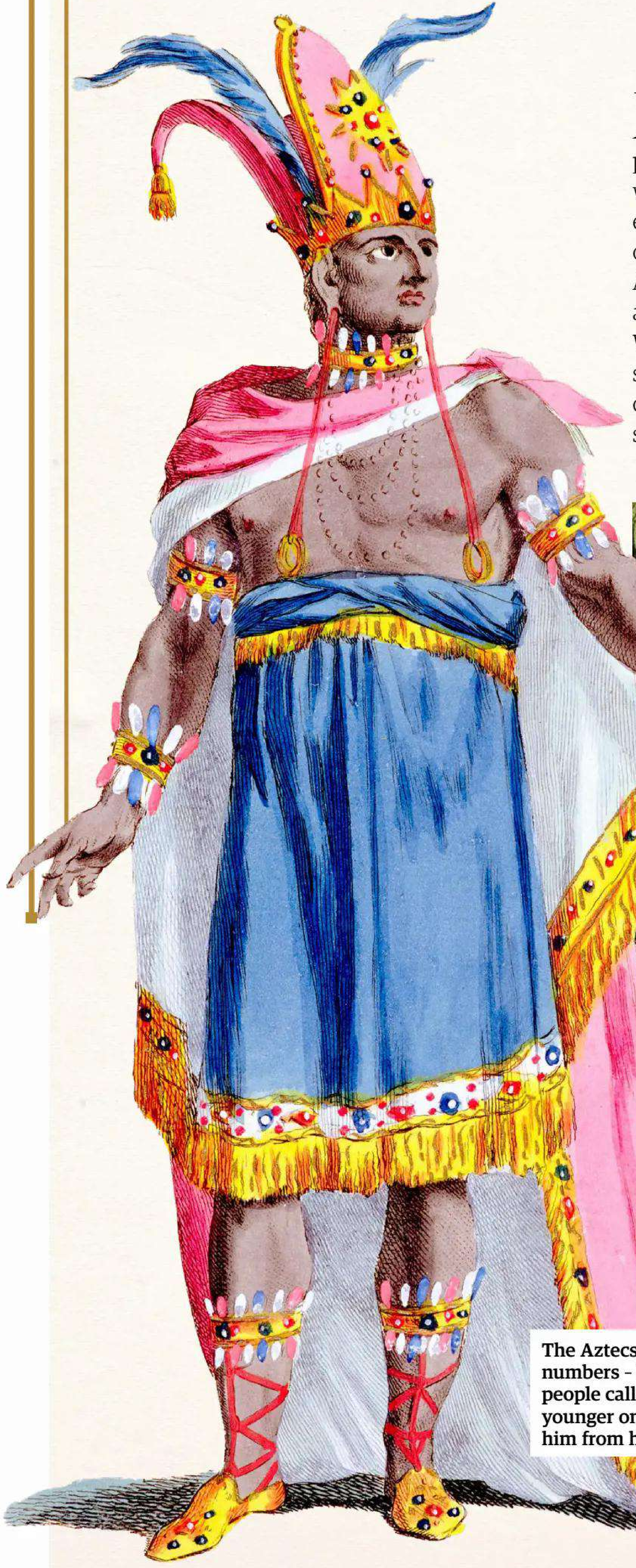
MOCTEZUMA II

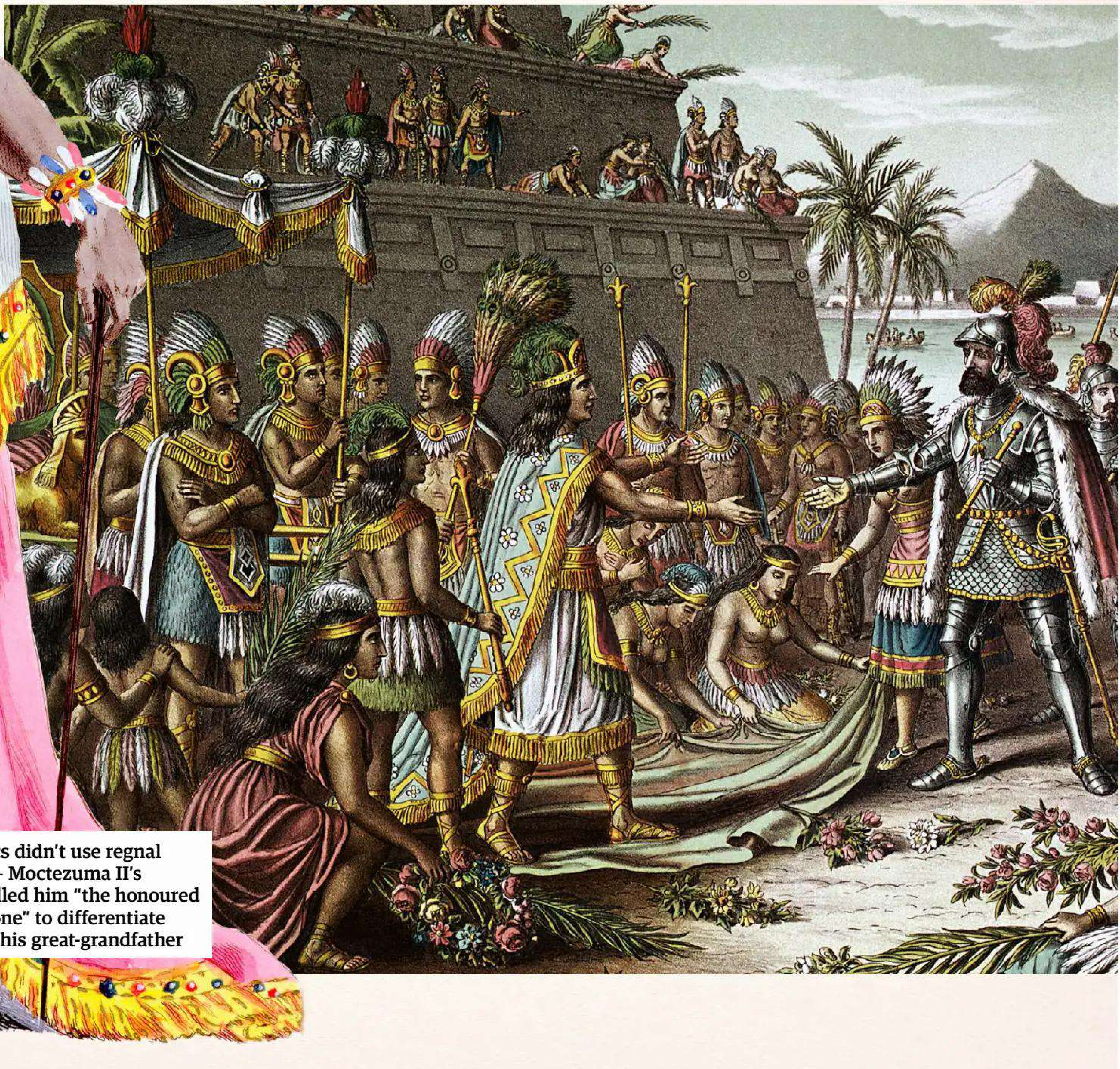
The emperor who ruled over the rise and fall of the Aztec Empire

Words **Scott Reeves**

Moctezuma rose to power around 36 years of age, by which point he had already proven himself as a great battlefield general whose conquests helped the Aztec Empire to expand throughout modern-day Mexico. Once on the throne, Moctezuma continued to push Aztec boundaries further to the south-west. He also directed his armies to fight in the Flower Wars - a series of conflicts between Mexican states in which the aim wasn't territorial conquest, but seizing prisoners who could be sacrificed to the gods.

After surviving a three-year drought early in his reign that caused huge suffering among his people, Moctezuma sought to prevent similar problems from occurring by reorganising the empire's administration in order to increase his personal power. Moctezuma had an elitist attitude to government - only nobles were permitted to serve in senior court and military positions - but he ensured that no individual could threaten his position by ordering his officials to reside near to the royal palace, where he could keep a close eye on them.

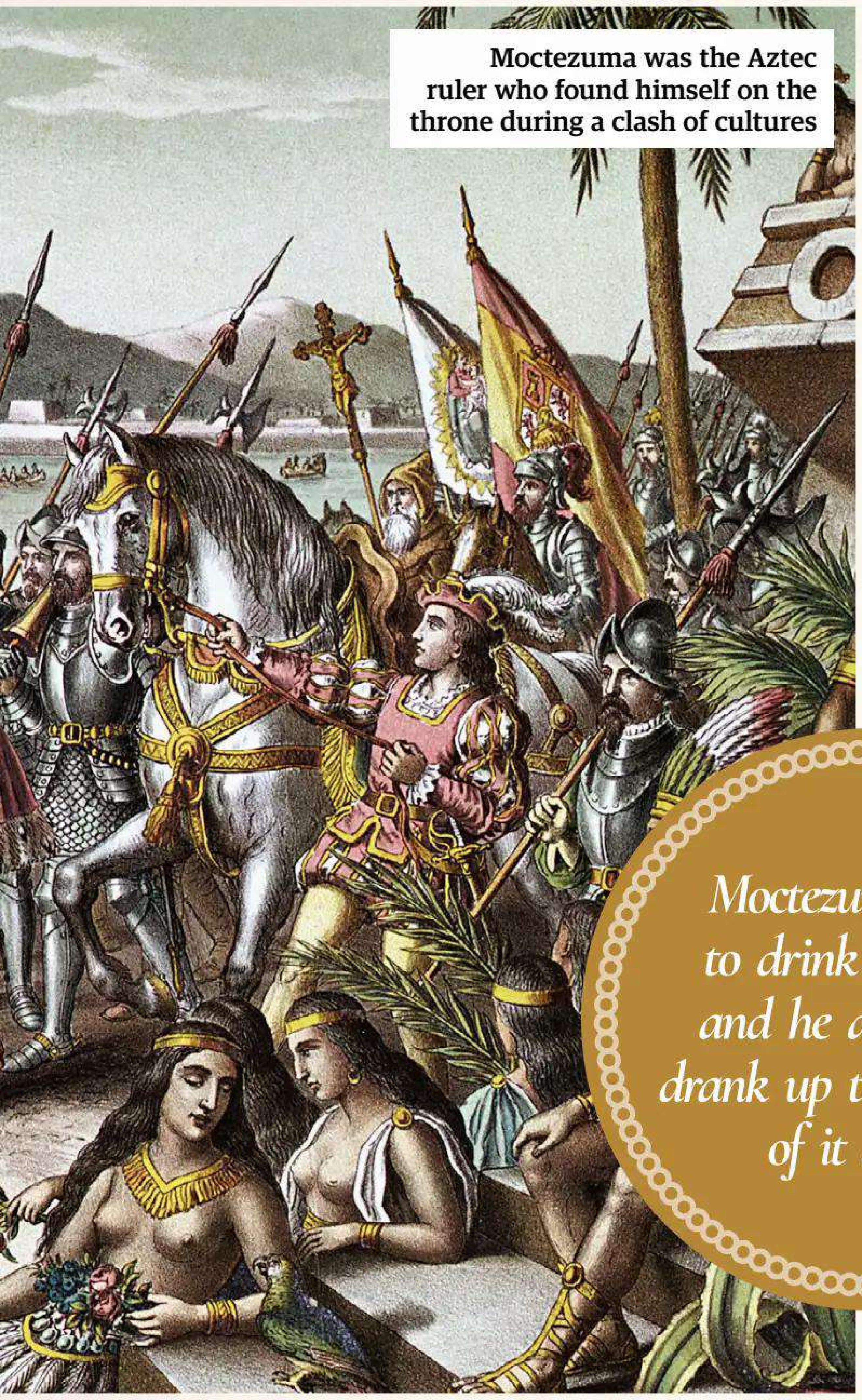




The Aztecs didn't use regnal numbers - Moctezuma II's people called him "the honoured younger one" to differentiate him from his great-grandfather

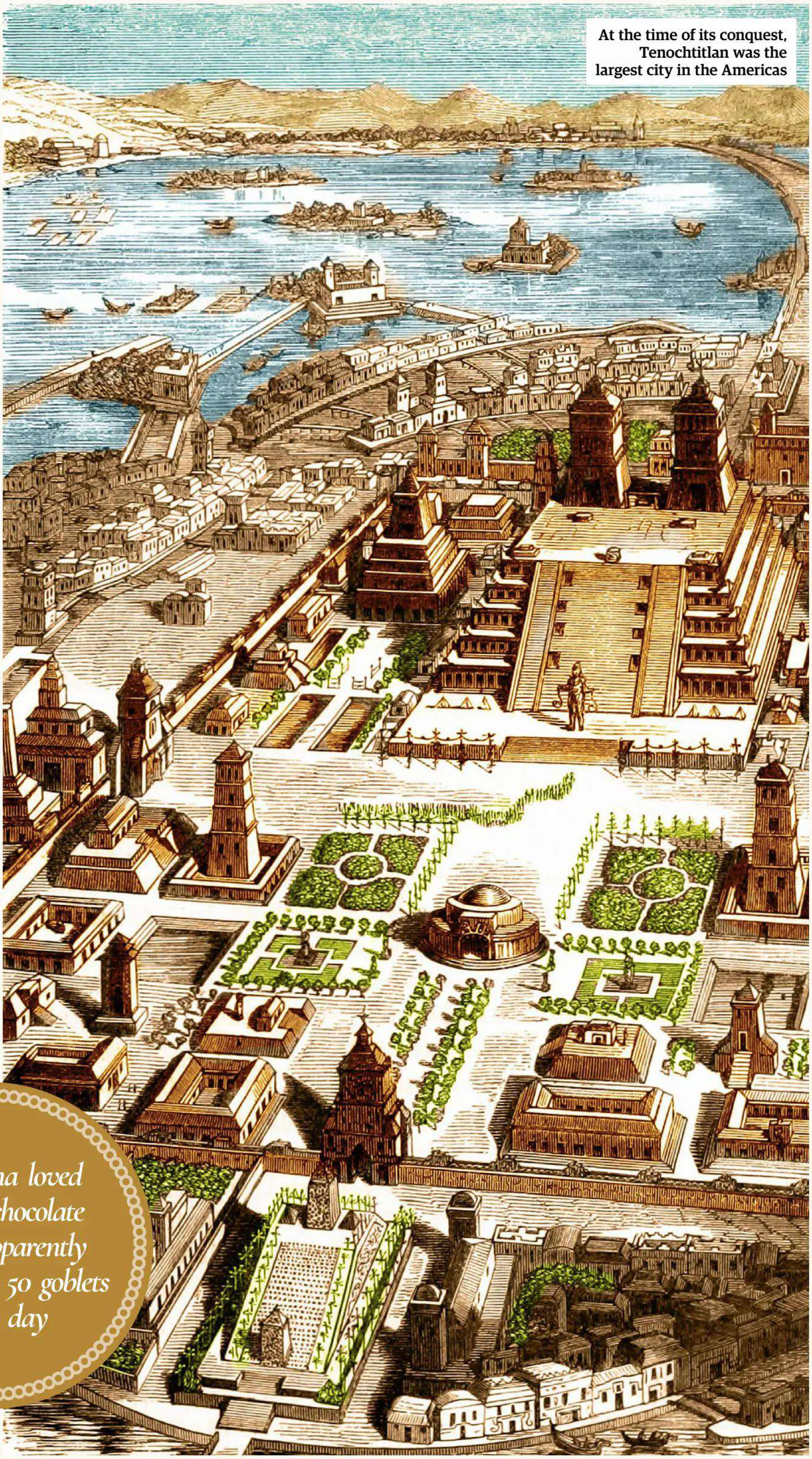
Moctezuma's Aztec Empire was the strongest in Central America, but a new and more powerful foe would soon emerge. In 1518, Moctezuma received reports that unfamiliar-looking ships had landed on the coast. They were pioneering explorers from Spain, and the following year, an expedition led by Spanish general Hernán Cortés was received by the Aztec king. Moctezuma handed over elaborate gold and silver calendar discs as examples of Aztec craftsmanship, but Moctezuma did not realise the Spanish had no interest in a harmonious trade relationship. Instead, Moctezuma was made a prisoner in his own palace. Over the next few months, Spanish forces overran the capital. Moctezuma died without regaining his freedom – either killed by his own people or murdered by the conquistadors, depending on which side's account you read.

Regardless of how he died, the king who ruled the empire at its greatest extent was also king during its sudden and shocking defeat. Although Moctezuma's brother and cousin continued the struggle for a short time, the Aztecs had no answer to Spanish weapons and armour, and Tenochtitlan was razed to the ground.



Moctezuma was the Aztec ruler who found himself on the throne during a clash of cultures

Moctezuma loved to drink chocolate and he apparently drank up to 50 goblets of it a day



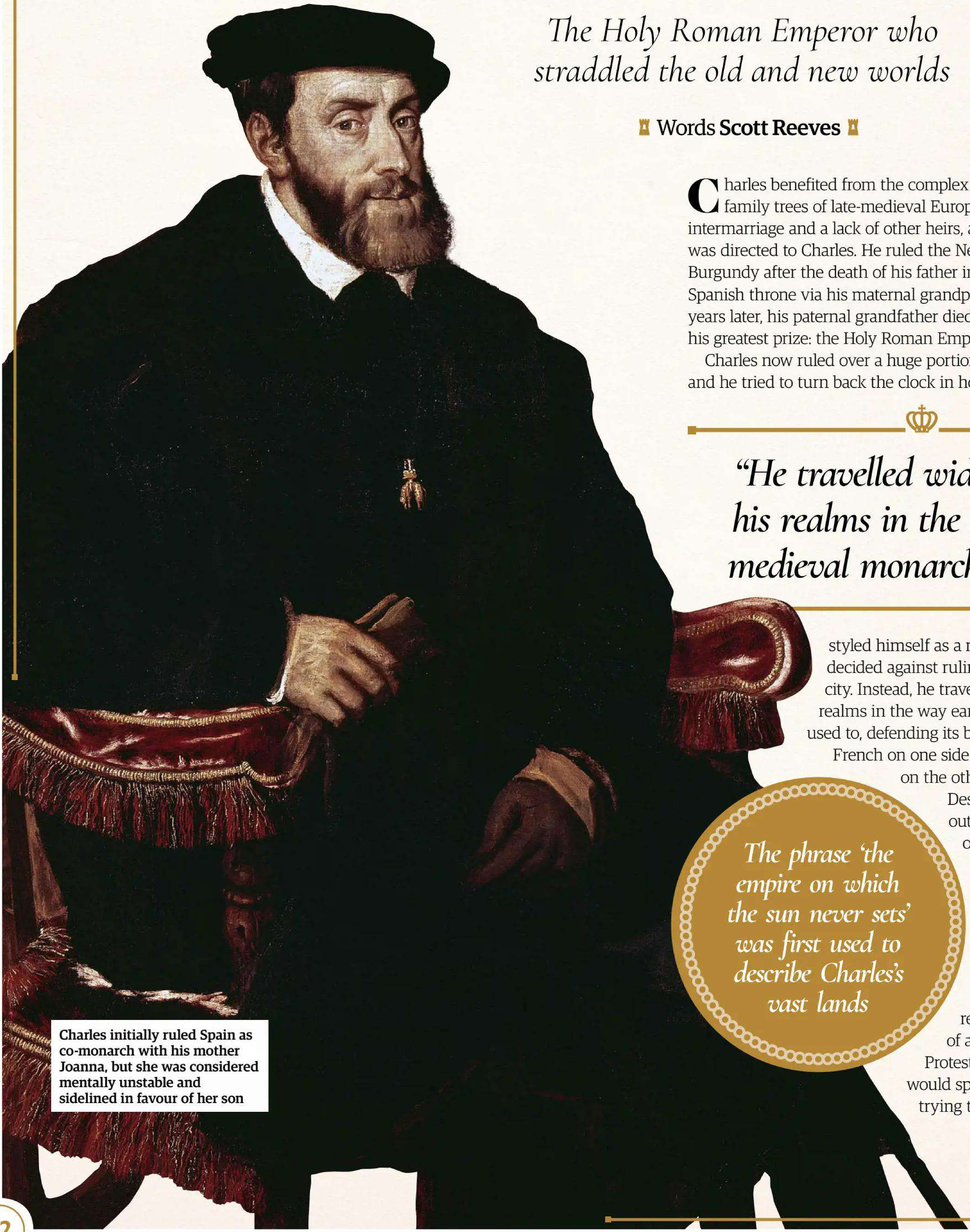
At the time of its conquest, Tenochtitlan was the largest city in the Americas

Holy Roman Empire, 1519-1556

CHARLES V

The Holy Roman Emperor who straddled the old and new worlds

Words **Scott Reeves**



Charles initially ruled Spain as co-monarch with his mother Joanna, but she was considered mentally unstable and sidelined in favour of her son

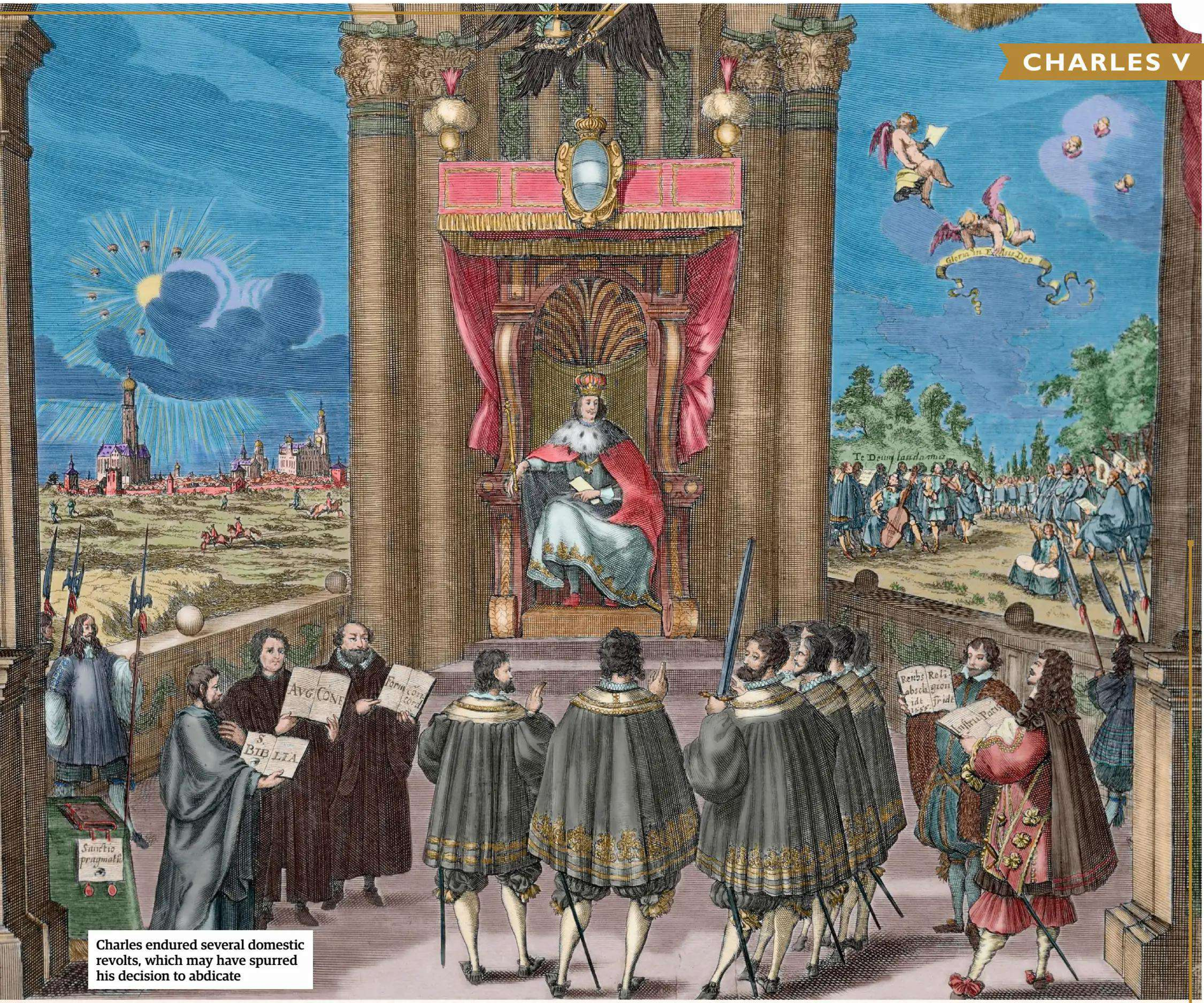
Charles benefited from the complex and intertwined family trees of late-medieval European royalty. Due to intermarriage and a lack of other heirs, a great swathe of land was directed to Charles. He ruled the Netherlands as Duke of Burgundy after the death of his father in 1506, then gained the Spanish throne via his maternal grandparents in 1516. Three years later, his paternal grandfather died and Charles received his greatest prize: the Holy Roman Empire.

Charles now ruled over a huge portion of mainland Europe, and he tried to turn back the clock in how he ruled it. Charles styled himself as a new Charlemagne and decided against ruling from a fixed capital city. Instead, he travelled widely across his realms in the way early medieval monarchs used to, defending its borders against the French on one side and the Ottoman Empire on the other.

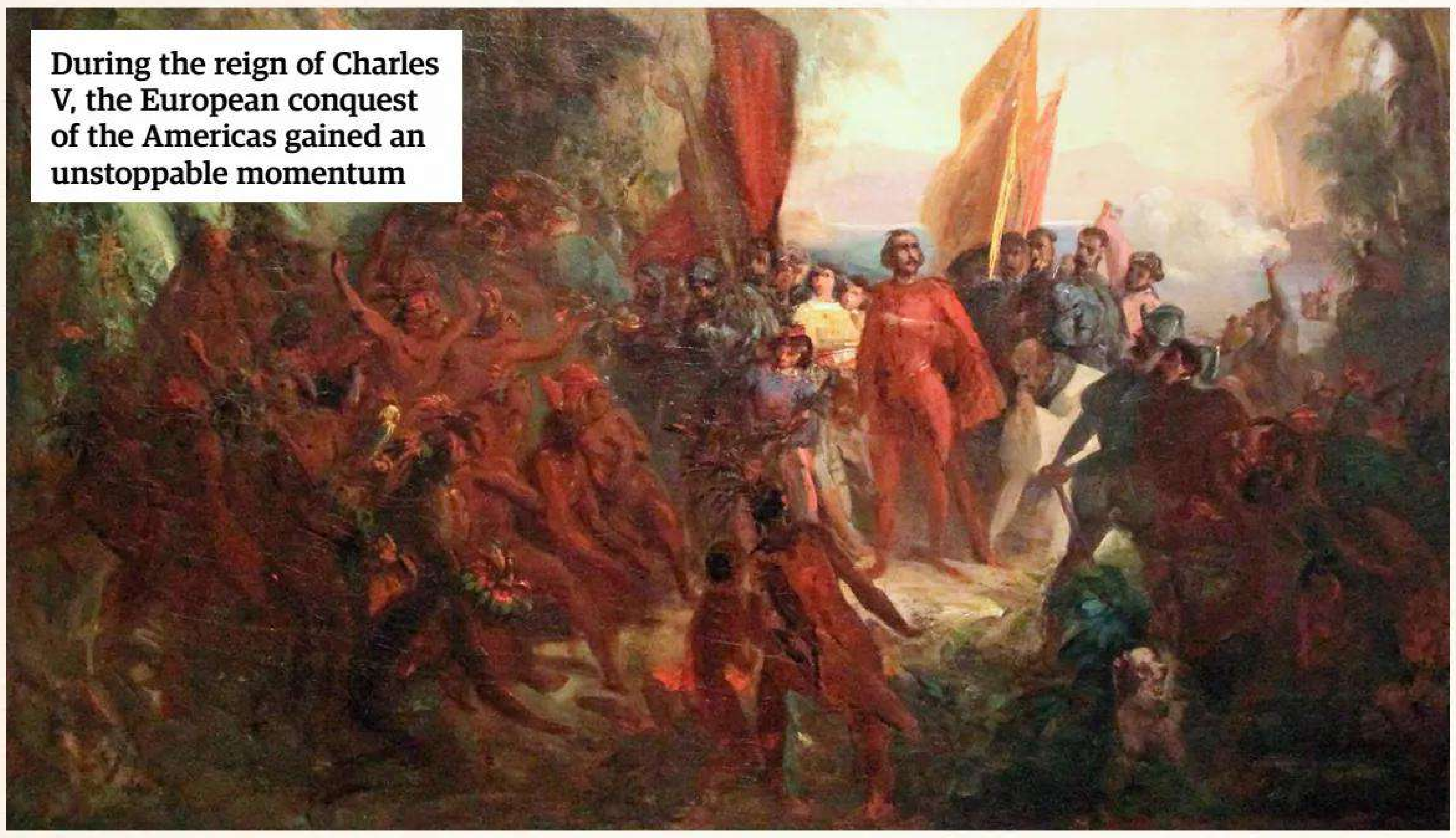
> *"He travelled widely across his realms in the way early medieval monarchs used to"*

Despite his historical outlook on the nature of kingship, Charles couldn't stop the spread of modern ideas and beliefs. Just before Charles took charge of the Holy Roman Empire, German monk, Martin Luther, nailed his religious tract to the door of a church. It sparked the Protestant Reformation. Charles would spend the rest of his life trying to manage the religious

The phrase 'the empire on which the sun never sets' was first used to describe Charles's vast lands



Charles endured several domestic revolts, which may have spurred his decision to abdicate

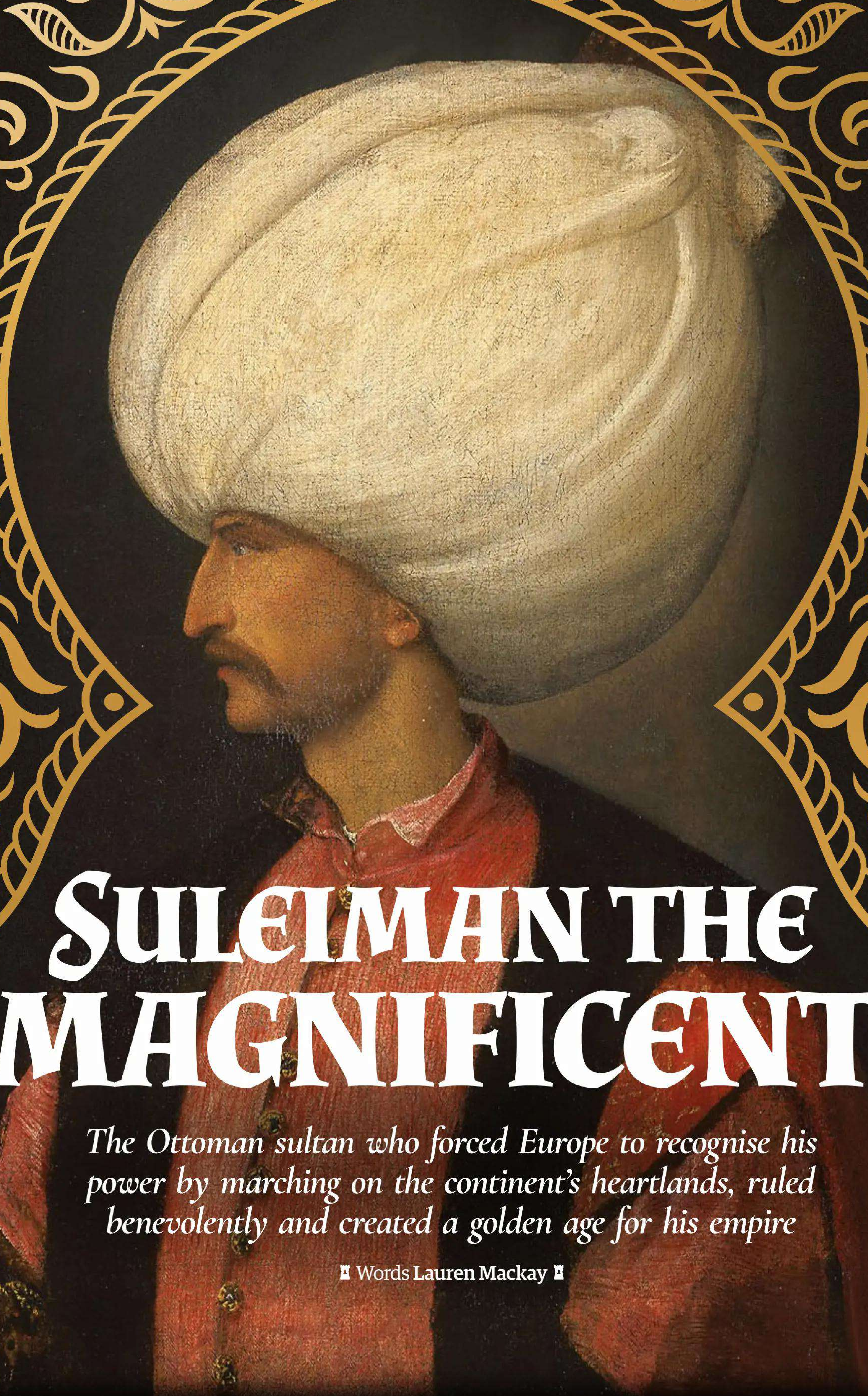


During the reign of Charles V, the European conquest of the Americas gained an unstoppable momentum

conflicts the new movement caused, and generally sided with the Pope and the Catholic church.

Charles also inherited a Spanish kingdom that was beginning to reach out over the Atlantic Ocean. It was in Charles's name that Spanish conquistadors subjugated the Aztec and Inca Empires, radically transforming the Americas at the point of a sword and the unintentional spread of European diseases, to which the indigenous people had no immunity to fight off.

Although Charles benefited from the flow of land and power to one individual, he decided that his vast realm would be a one-generation phenomenon. He abdicated in 1556, splitting his lands in two. Charles's Spanish and Italian possessions went to his son, who would reign as Philip II. He left the Holy Roman Empire to his brother, Ferdinand, giving rise to two branches of the Habsburgs that ruled alongside each other for the next 150 years.



SULEIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT

The Ottoman sultan who forced Europe to recognise his power by marching on the continent's heartlands, ruled benevolently and created a golden age for his empire

Words **Lauren Mackay**

At the beginning of the 16th century, the balance of power in Europe was held by three dynamic young rulers: Henry VIII of England, Francis I of France and Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. News of the accession of the 26-year-old Suleiman I to the throne of the distant Ottoman Empire in 1520 barely raised an eyebrow. But in just over a year, the sultan's name would be known throughout the Western world and in his lifetime Europeans would address him by an even grander title: Suleiman the Magnificent.

Our earliest report about Suleiman describes him as tall with a round face, a wiry aquiline nose, a neck that was a little too long, piercing hazel eyes and a broad forehead. He received a royal education from the age of seven when he was sent to the bustling Topkapı Palace in the Ottoman capital, Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul).

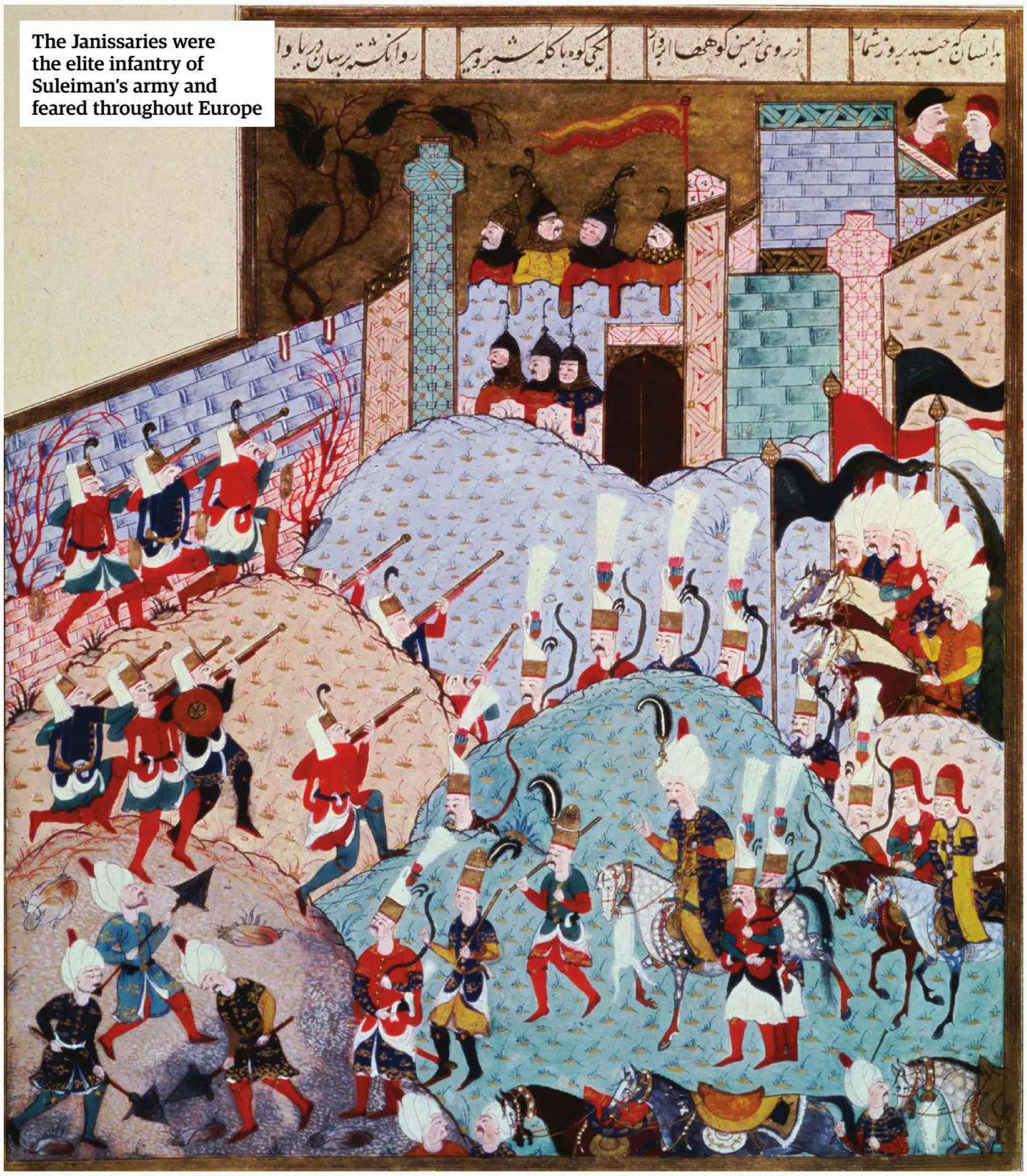
Among the elegant halls lined with blue, white and turquoise mosaic tiles and surrounded by fine carpets and textiles, famous scholars tutored young Suleiman in history, science, literature, theology and military tactics. He was a gifted poet and a linguist, fluent in five languages – Turkish, Arabic, Chagatai (a Central Asian Turkic dialect), Persian and Serbian. In fact, part of the reason the Europeans were so unconcerned with Suleiman's coronation was that he was known to be scholarly, not a warmonger like his father.

Suleiman's father, Selim I (also known as Selim the Grim), reigned for only eight years, but he left his son in an unrivalled strategic position with a greatly expanded empire after conquering the Egyptian Mamluk Sultanate and the Persian Safavid dynasty. This meant that as well as governing modern-day Greece, Turkey and the coast of the Black Sea, Suleiman inherited Egypt, Libya, Syria, Palestine, the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia and the Algerian coast. Though Selim had been hostile towards Europe, it was generally assumed that his son would continue expanding further east. But the young, ambitious sultan had other ideas.

Suleiman and Charles V harboured similar ambitions, both significantly greater than their other European counterparts, which would keep the pair on a collision course for most of their reigns. While Henry VIII dreamed of reclaiming France, and in turn, Francis fantasised about one day retaking the Duchy of Milan, Charles was fervently dedicated to uniting and expanding Christendom under his own global monarchy. This would include recapturing Jerusalem and even Suleiman's beloved capital, Constantinople. The sultan, on the other hand, was significantly influenced by stories of the Greek hero Alexander the Great and saw himself as taking up the mighty ruler's mantle.

Suleiman may have also envied Charles who, through numerous inheritances, ruled an even greater territory than him. This included swathes of western, central and southern Europe, along with the Spanish colonies in the Americas and Asia. Long before Victorian Britain appropriated it, Charles' realm was described by Spanish priest Fray Francisco de Ugalde as "the empire on which the sun never sets".

> *"The sultan, on the other hand, was significantly influenced by stories of Alexander the Great"*

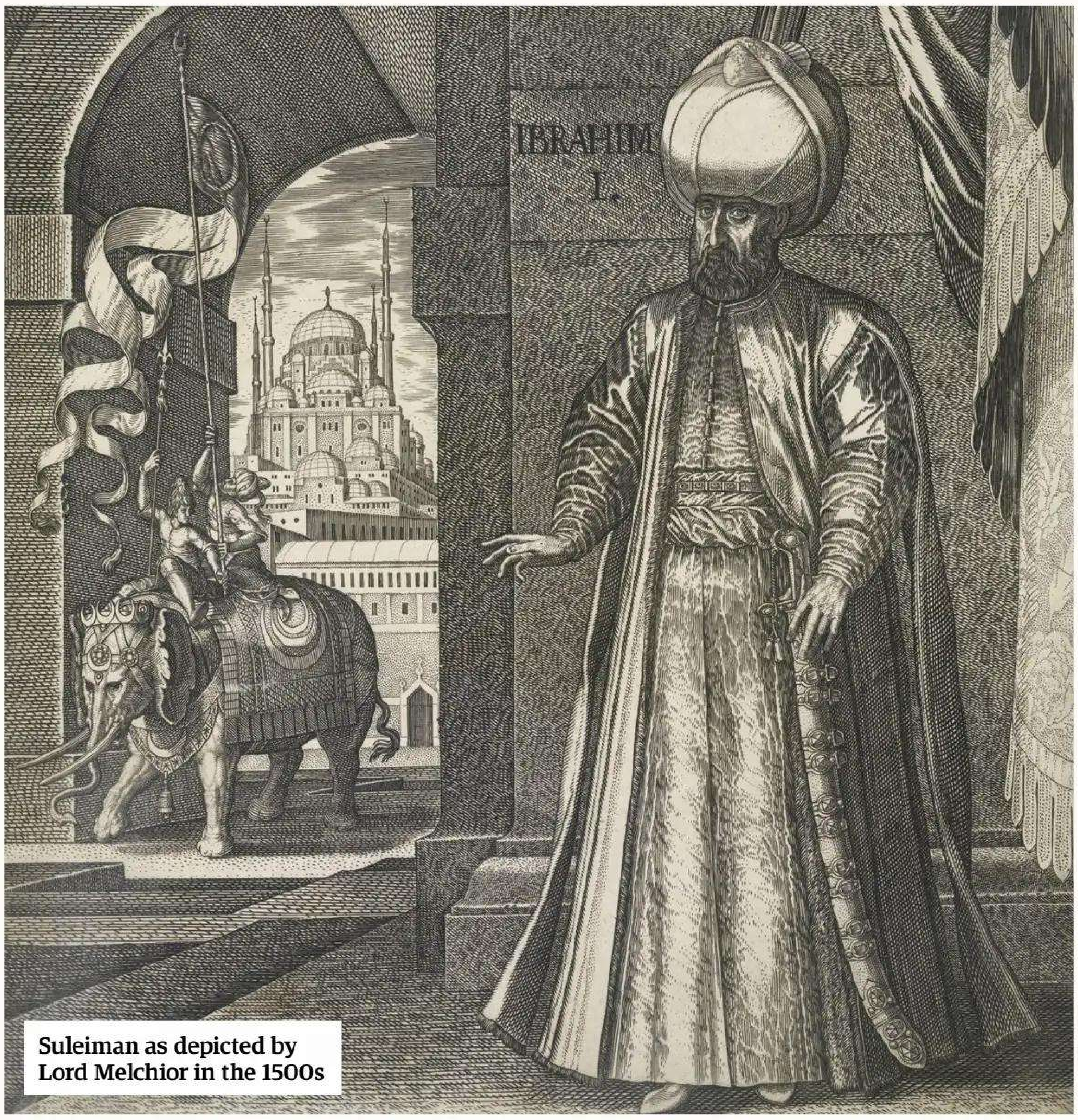


The Janissaries were the elite infantry of Suleiman's army and feared throughout Europe

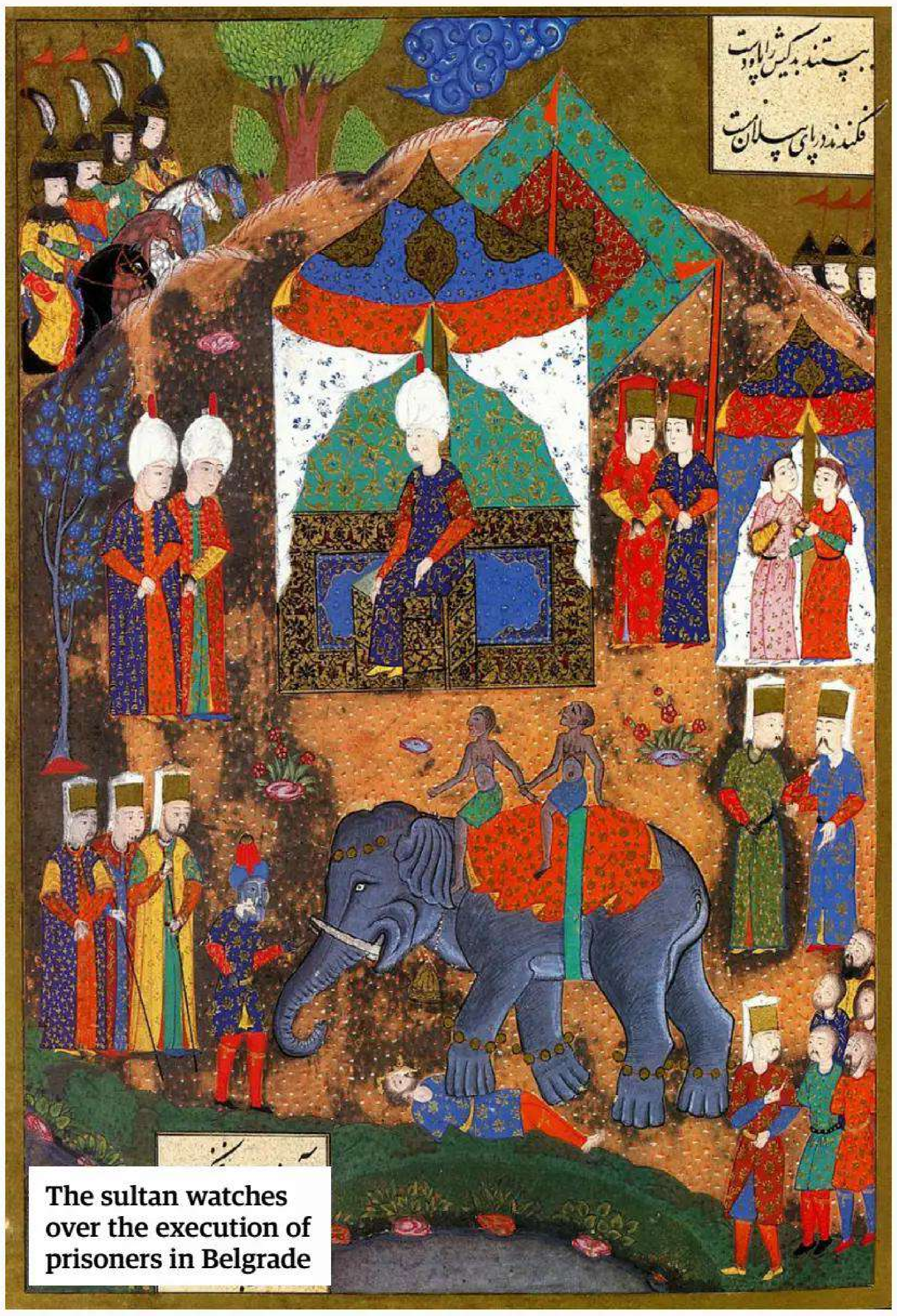
Charles, who was also connected to Henry and Francis by marriage (at least until the English king divorced Catherine of Aragon), was a major political player, while Suleiman was an outsider. And yet, as history would show, his influence over the course of the 16th century was immense and, as one biographer wrote, even Charles, the most powerful man in Europe, spent most of his life dancing to the tune called by the sultan.

In July 1521, the newly crowned Suleiman made his intentions very clear: he marched west. At the head of an army of 6,000 horsemen of the imperial guard, the elite infantry units of the Janissaries, foot soldiers and 200 strapping young men from prominent families, the sultan laid siege to Belgrade, a fortified city on the Danube River, then part of the Kingdom of Hungary. With a flotilla of ships also blockading the city to prevent reinforcement, it soon fell. However, unlike Charles' wild and destructive

Image Getty Images (Janissaries)



Suleiman as depicted by Lord Melchior in the 1500s



The sultan watches over the execution of prisoners in Belgrade

troops sacking Rome in 1527, Suleiman's army provided monetary compensation for property damaged during the invasion and any man caught marauding was immediately executed.

Suleiman had gained a foothold in Europe's heartlands, but rather than advance onto the continent further, he turned his attention to the island of Rhodes. This was a Mediterranean stronghold for the Order of the Knights of Saint John, also known as the Knights Hospitaller, who were a hold-over from the Crusades. The knights were already a blight on the Ottoman Empire's ships, stealing cargoes of grain and gold and enslaving their Muslim crews. Now that Suleiman had declared war on the West, the knights could pose an even greater threat.

The sultan had inherited an already powerful naval fleet from his father and had made a considerable effort to strengthen it. With approximately 400 well-equipped ships and 100,000 fit and loyal men, he emerged victorious in Rhodes in December 1522 – though it took six months of brutal fighting.

Again, Suleiman was shrewdly merciful. Out of his respect for their ardent defence, he gave the knights 12 days to leave and allowed them to take their weapons and any valuables or religious icons they desired. Suleiman also ordered that any inhabitants of the island who wished to leave would be able to do so at any time within a three-year period.

Suleiman chose to rule not through fear but by winning over an otherwise hostile population, and so the inhabitants of Rhodes were encouraged to stay, albeit as his subjects. Importantly, he did not compel the Christians to adopt Islam and he promised that no church would be desecrated or turned into a mosque. In fact, much of Suleiman's approach to expansion was very diplomatic.

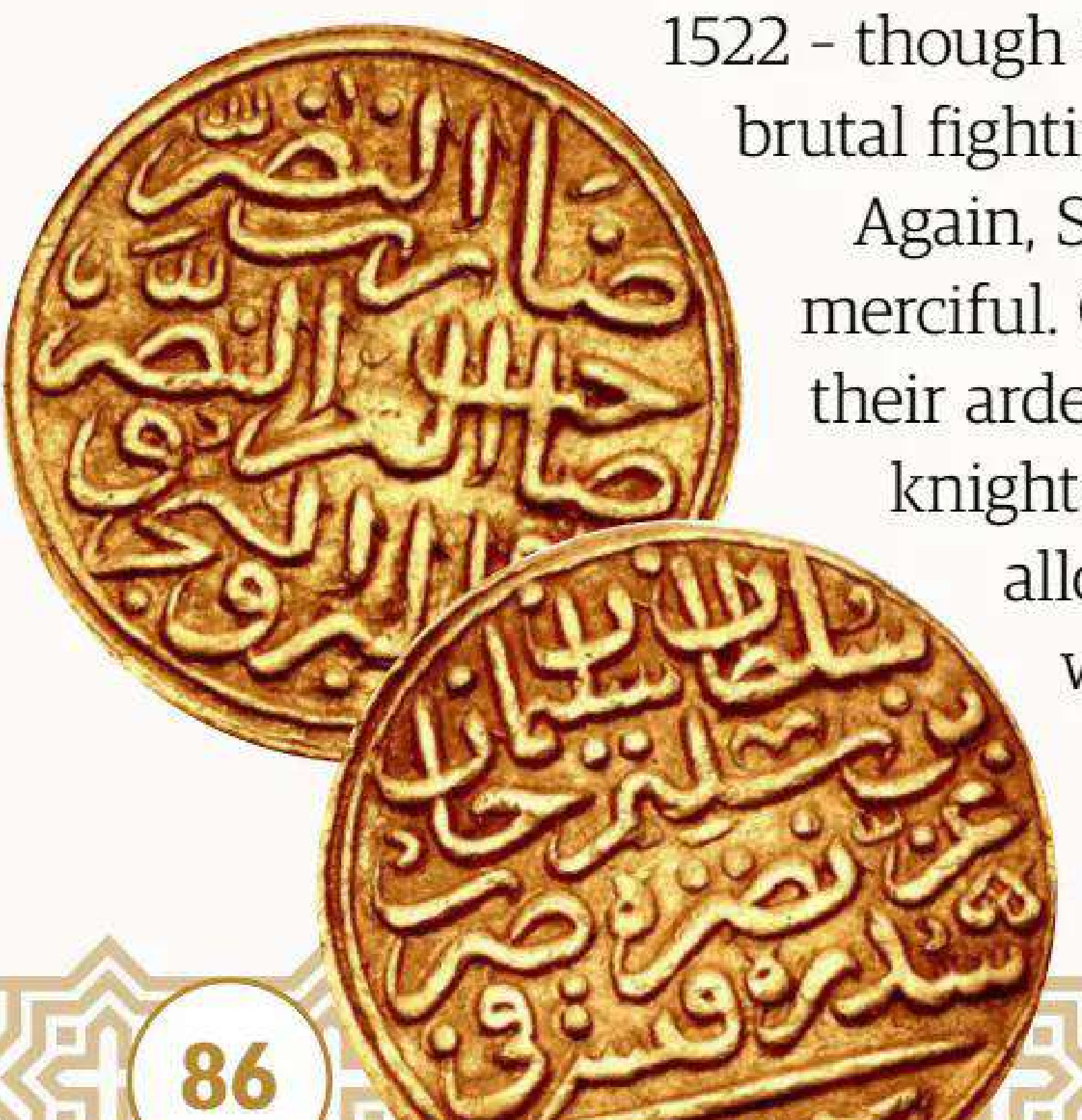
"His formidable elite infantry were the feared Janissaries"

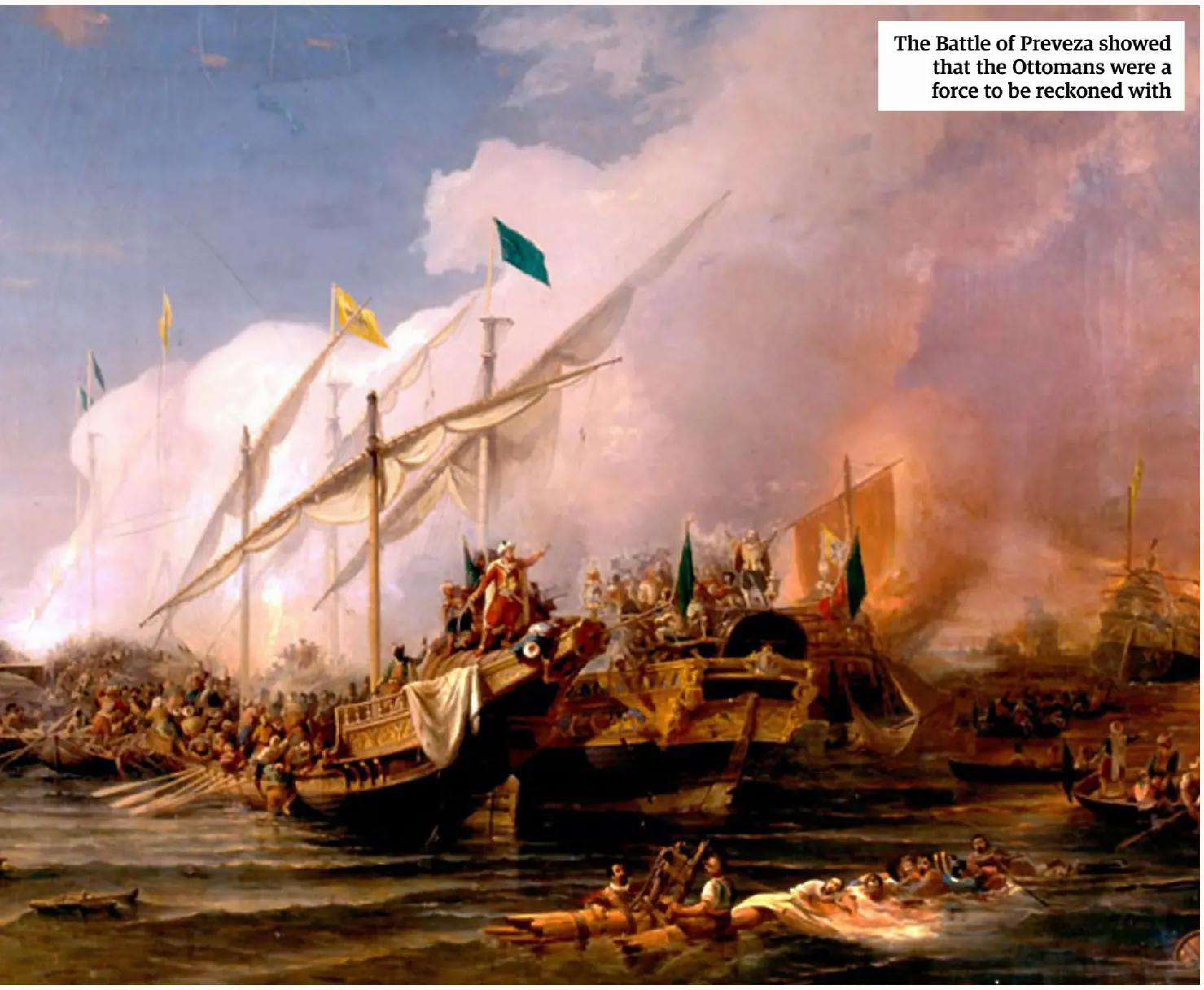
For decades, the Moors and Jews expelled from Spain had flocked to Constantinople, which acquired a reputation for being a city of tolerance; all religions could be practised freely without fear of persecution. These new citizens contributed their skills as merchants, craftsmen and bankers. It is true that all non-Muslims had to pay an additional tax, which contributed to the Ottoman coffers, but they could live in peace.

Suleiman sent envoys into the mountain ranges near Transylvania, to the chieftains of the Bosnians and Croats, where he further cultivated loyalty through peaceful relations. In parts of Greece that had come under Ottoman rule, it was reported that farmers actually flourished more than they had under the Venetians. Greek and French merchants enjoyed a thriving trade, and the Ottoman Empire was generally viewed as a realm of stability. What began as a fear of a 'Turkish Terror' in Eastern Europe evolved into 'Pax Turcica', the Turkish Peace.

Things were not the same in Western Europe. Francis I and Charles V were almost constantly at loggerheads; in the words of Francis' sister, they were born to hate each other. Interestingly, it was his enmity with Charles that forced Francis to look to the Ottoman Empire as a potential ally in the wars against the Holy Roman Emperor.

When the Holy Roman Emperor took Francis hostage after the Battle of Pavia in 1525, the French king's mother diplomatically suggested a rapprochement with the sultan. Suleiman saw an opportunity, a new way of furthering his position on the chessboard of Europe, and wrote a rousing and reassuring letter of support to Francis. It was a circumspect and subtle beginning to the Franco-Ottoman alliance that





The Battle of Preveza showed that the Ottomans were a force to be reckoned with

would span centuries, one judged by Europe as "the impious alliance" and "the sacrilegious union of the Lily and the Crescent."

In 1526, Suleiman, with Francis' tacit encouragement, marched on Hungary and defeated their king at the Battle of Mohács. But the Ottomans' most ambitious expedition and thrust towards the West would ultimately result in failure: in 1529, Suleiman marched through the valley of the Danube and laid siege to Vienna. It would be his first defeat and, despite a second attempt in 1532, the very heart of the Holy Roman Empire eluded him.

Still, Suleiman's armies had struck fear among his European counterparts. His formidable elite infantry were the feared Janissaries, formed from prisoners of war and slaves but mostly recruited from Christian children in Greece, Albania and the Balkans. Taken into the heart of the Ottoman Empire, they were trained and tutored to become the finest troops and were the most loyal defenders of the sultan.

The Austrian ambassador Ogier de Busbecq wrote years later that the sultan's forces showed incredible discipline: they were patient, obedient, never prone to brawling and, above all, fearless. They abstained from alcohol and lived on a diet of turnips, cucumber, garlic, salt and vinegar. They only drank water, which they mixed, once or twice a day, with flour, a small bit of butter, powdered beef and spices – perhaps the Ottoman Empire's answer to the modern-day protein shake. Busbecq concluded, "I dread to think what the future holds for us when I compare the Turkish system to ours."

But ambassadors wrote to their monarchs of more than the Ottomans' military might. The details of the Ottoman court itself, described in detail by Holy Roman, French and Venetian ambassadors, reveal a world of grandeur, opulence and refinement. Soon, Ottoman dress, art and culture permeated Europe, becoming highly prized. Throughout Suleiman's reign, there was enormous admiration for this inventive, intelligent monarch. Suleiman had once been called the 'Scourge of Heaven' – now he was known as 'the Magnificent'.

Suleiman wore elaborate floor-length caftans made of satins and silks, often lined with sable and patterned in ways that made even the most extravagant of European monarchs look rather drab and pedestrian. He was also partial to shirts made of soft white linen, lined with white cotton faced with rose-coloured silk, all perfumed with aloe wood, and the sultan never wore the same clothes twice.

He dined on a silver table using silver plates and drank wine from a goblet made from a single piece of turquoise. With over 50 courses served by 200 attendants wearing red silk and

EMPIRE TOP TRUMPS

How do the leaders compare against each other?

HENRY VIII

MILITARY	WANTED TO CONSOLIDATE HIS DYNASTY	5
RELIGIOUS	LOW-MEDIUM	4
POPULATION	3 MILLION	2
TOTAL	151.000 KM²	1
CONQUESTS	NOT MANY ATTEMPTS MADE	2

CHARLES V

MILITARY	HAD A LARGE, FEROCIOUS ARMY	8
RELIGIOUS	LOW	2
POPULATION	28 MILLION	9
TOTAL	4,000,000 KM2	9
CONQUESTS	VERY MILITARILY CAPABLE	8

SULEIMAN

MILITARY	LED THE FEARED JANISSARIES	9
RELIGIOUS	HIGH	9
POPULATION	5 MILLION	6
TOTAL	2,273,720 KM2	7
CONQUESTS	AN ABLE MILITARY STRATEGIST	9

Images Getty Images, Classical Numismatic Group, Inc/CC BY-SA 2.5 (coins)

gold-embroidered hats, the sultan and his court would eat in halls filled with thick carpets and cloths of gold. His tables were laden with an array of seafood from the Bosphorus: lobster, sturgeon, muscles, swordfish. Henry VIII may have a reputation for indulgence, even gluttony, but his feasts paled in comparison to Suleiman's.

The beauty of Turkish dress and carpets captured the attention and imagination of Europe. From the Doge's Palace in Venice – through which Ottoman art, textiles and culture flowed – to Hampton Court, vibrant textiles and carpets were a symbol of wealth and sophistication. Henry VIII himself, on several occasions, even participated in court masques dressed as a 'Turk'.

> *"Suleiman was also a great patronof artists and philosophers"*

In 1532, Venetian merchants sold Suleiman a gold throne studded with jewels and pearls, estimated to cost 40,000 ducats. He sat in his great hall on this throne receiving gifts: cotton from Egypt, damask from Syria; from Mosul, silver plates, cloth of gold and lapis lazuli. Suleiman was particularly fond of Chinese porcelain and he imported furs and Arabian horses. Even on campaigns, the sultan made an impression.

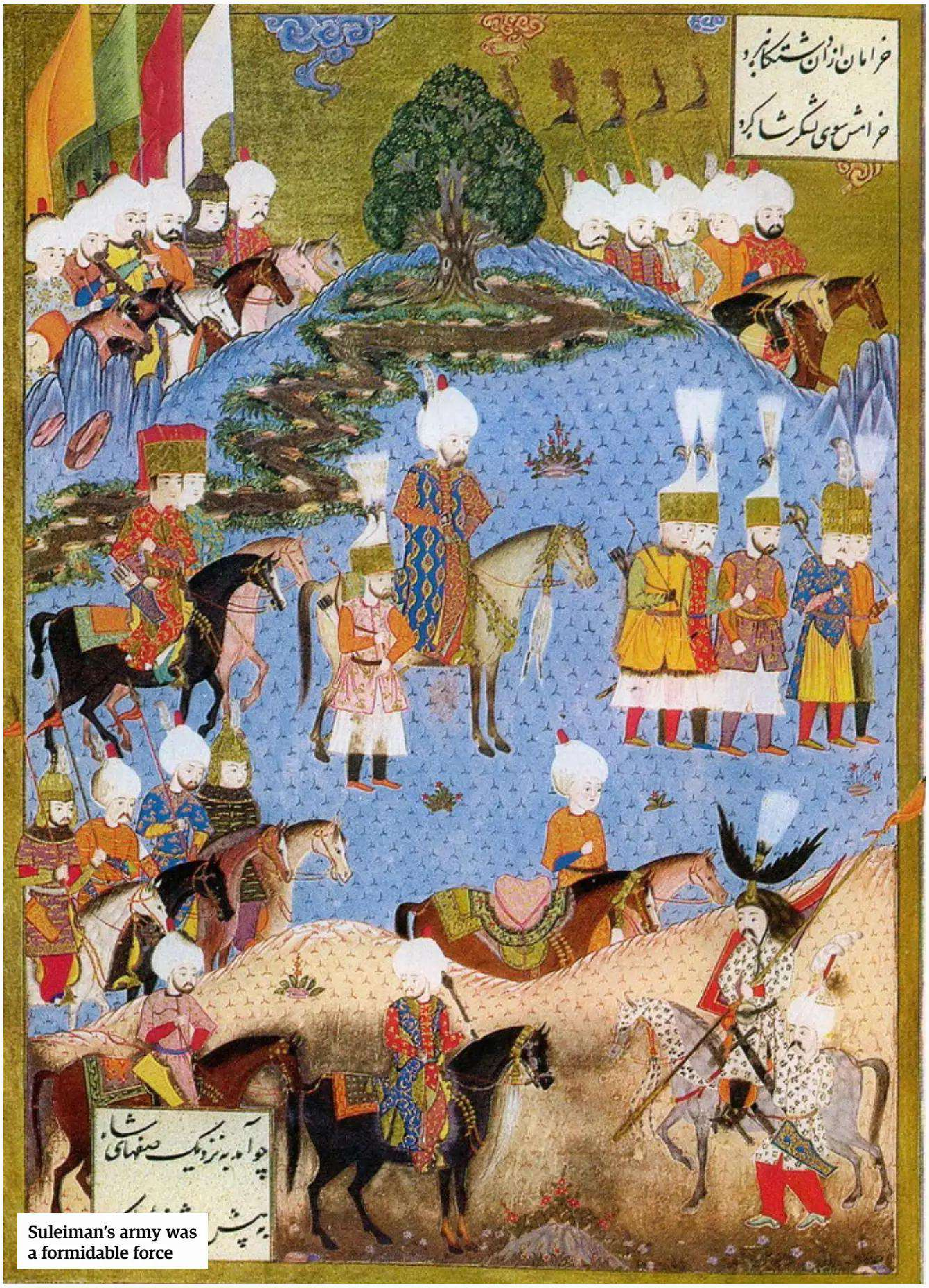
Contemporary descriptions of his triumphal march to Vienna in 1532 describe foot soldiers and cavalry troops followed by standard-bearers carrying flags with Ottoman crescents and the prophet Muhammad's name embroidered in pearls and jewels. 12 pages followed, carrying costly helmets glittering with gemstones. One of the most famous ones was a golden helmet of four crowns, all with enormous 12-carat pearls, diamonds, rubies and a large turquoise stone. It was a triumph of Venetian craftsmanship and, rather curiously, bore a striking resemblance to the papal tiara.

Suleiman rode on a magnificent horse, the saddle of which was estimated to be worth 70,000 ducats, while its chamfron – the plate designed to protect the horse's face – boasted a piece of turquoise as large as an egg. The sultan wore a large turban and a fur-lined gold brocade caftan of royal purple embroidered with jewels. Around his neck, he wore a gold chain that was so heavy it required attendants to ride on both sides to relieve the weight.

Suleiman earned the admiration of visitors to his court. Ambassador Busbecq was impressed by his wise approach to advisors and councillors. He wrote that "in making his appointments the sultan pays no regard to any pretensions on the score of wealth or rank, nor does he take into consideration recommendations or popularity; he considers each case on its own merits and examines carefully into the character, ability, and disposition of the man. Each man carries in his own hand his ancestry and his position in life, which he may make or mar as he will."

While the Europeans described Suleiman as magnificent for his opulence, his subjects gave him the title of 'Kanuni', meaning 'Lawgiver'. He embarked on a series of administrative reviews and made major legislative changes in the areas of education, taxation and criminal law. His reforms assisted in bridging the two forms of Ottoman law, sultanic and Sharia, and were called 'Qanun-e-Osmani', or the 'Ottoman Laws'. These would stay in place for three centuries.

Suleiman was also a great patron of artists and philosophers. Artists and skilled calligraphers, such as Ahmad Karahisari and Kara Memi, were welcome at court. The sultan financed developments in numerous fields, particularly manuscript painting, textiles and ceramics.



Suleiman's army was a formidable force

ROXELANA: THE OTTOMAN ANNE BOLEYN

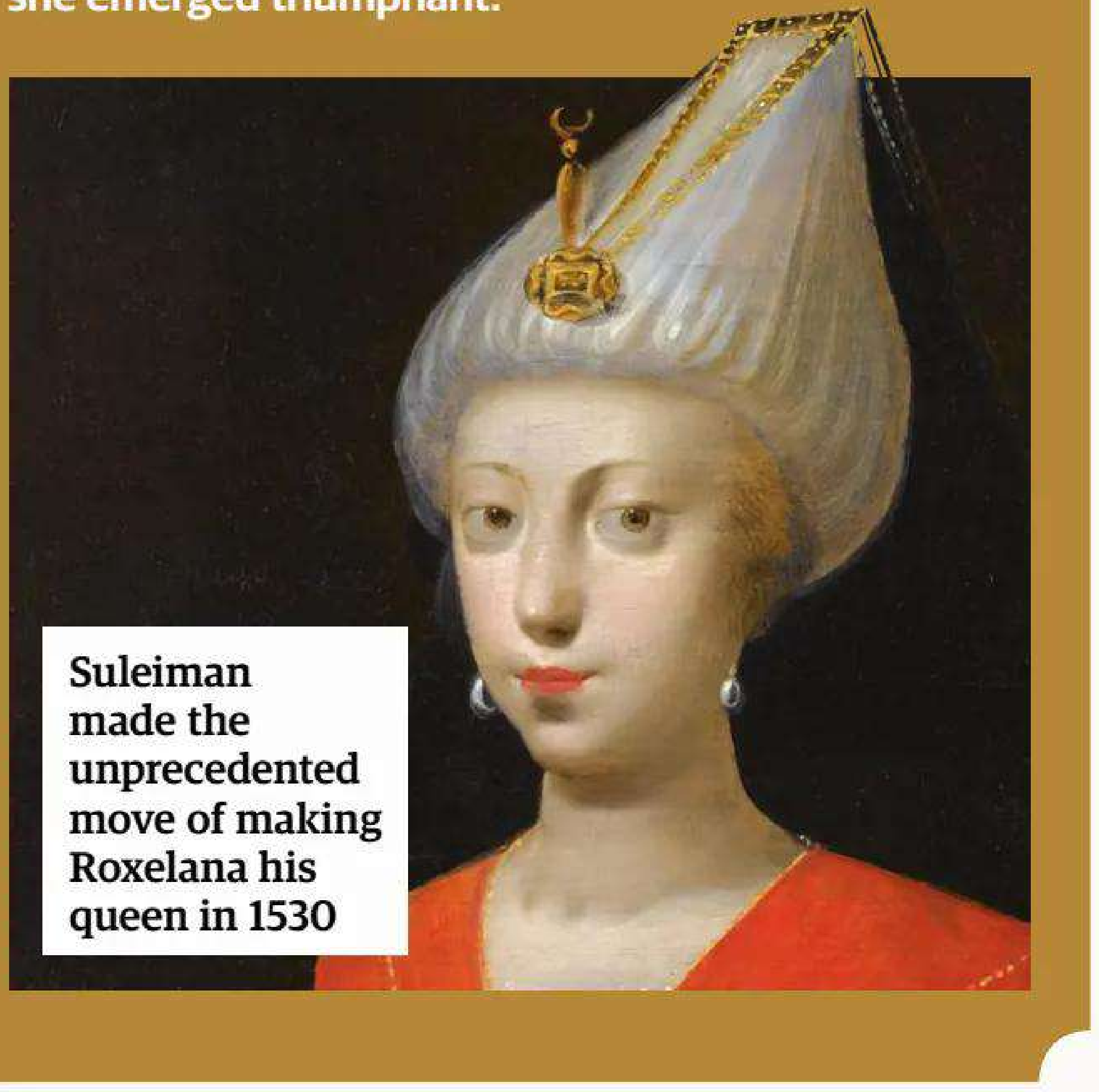
Roxelana's astonishing success at Suleiman's court was attributed not only to her beauty but also to her intelligence and ambition

A young woman appeared at Suleiman's court in 1523, captured by Turkish raiders in Galatia. It is believed that she was originally from Ruthenia, in present-day Ukraine, and so she was given the nickname 'Roxelana', meaning 'the Russian' or the 'Ruthenian One'. She was fair with long red hair and, while in the sultan's harem, her beauty, bright, witty nature and sharp intelligence caught the sultan's eye and she soon became a favourite. But this was only the beginning.

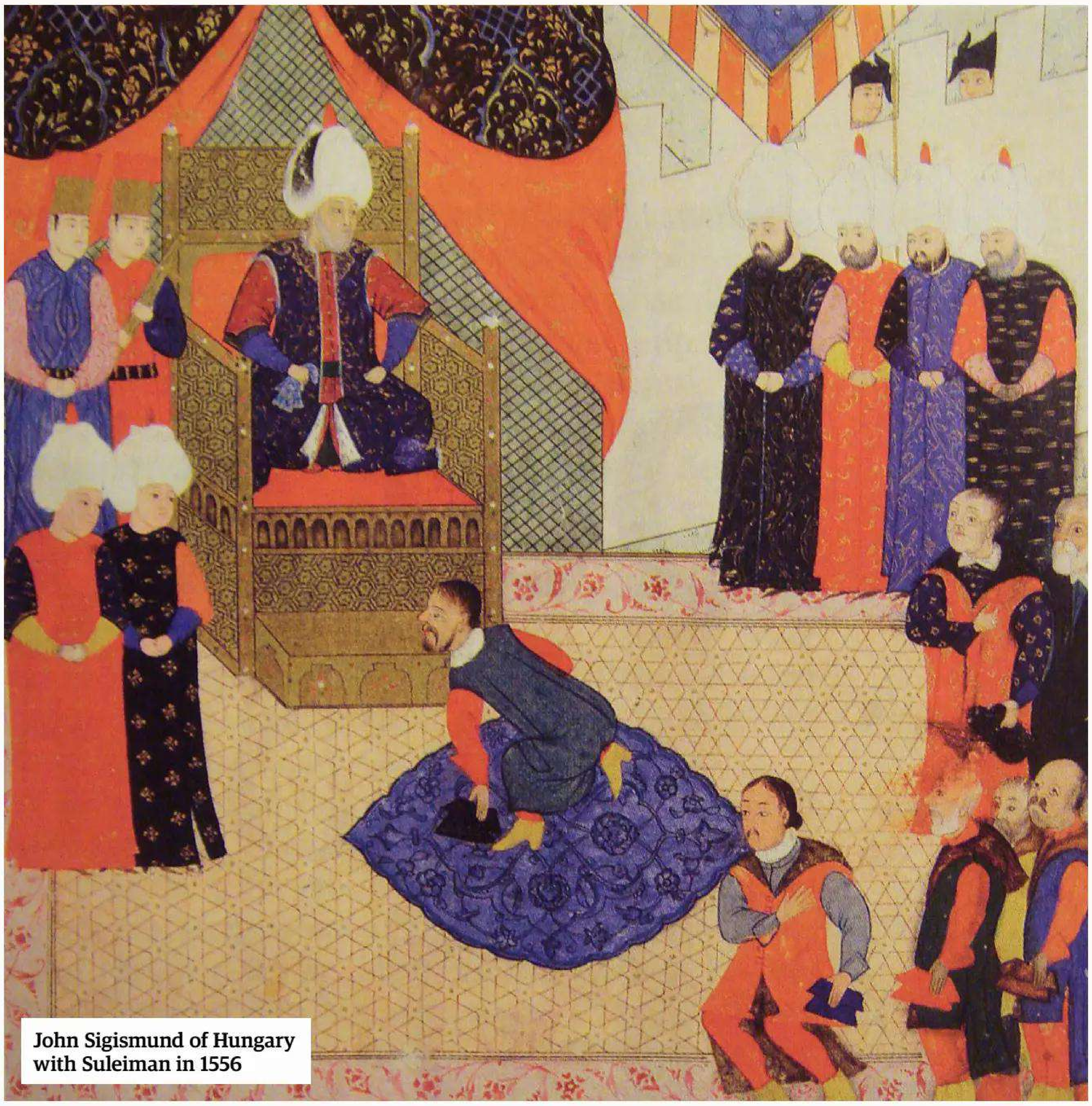
Suleiman made the unprecedented move of forsaking all other women in his harem and became devoted only to Roxelana. It was rumoured that she ensured things would stay that way by burning the harem down so that to remain with her beloved she had to move into the sultan's apartments until a new harem could be rebuilt. It never was.

Such was Suleiman's unwavering devotion to her that he made her chief consort, supplanting Mahidevran, mother to the sultan's only son. But it was his unprecedented decision to marry Roxelana, making her his queen, that astounded the country as it broke with centuries of tradition. As with so many powerful and influential women, it was rumoured by those who resented Roxelana's success that she had 'bewitched' the sultan. Certainly his poems to Roxelana remain some of the most famous and passionate love poems of the age and suggest a man utterly entranced.

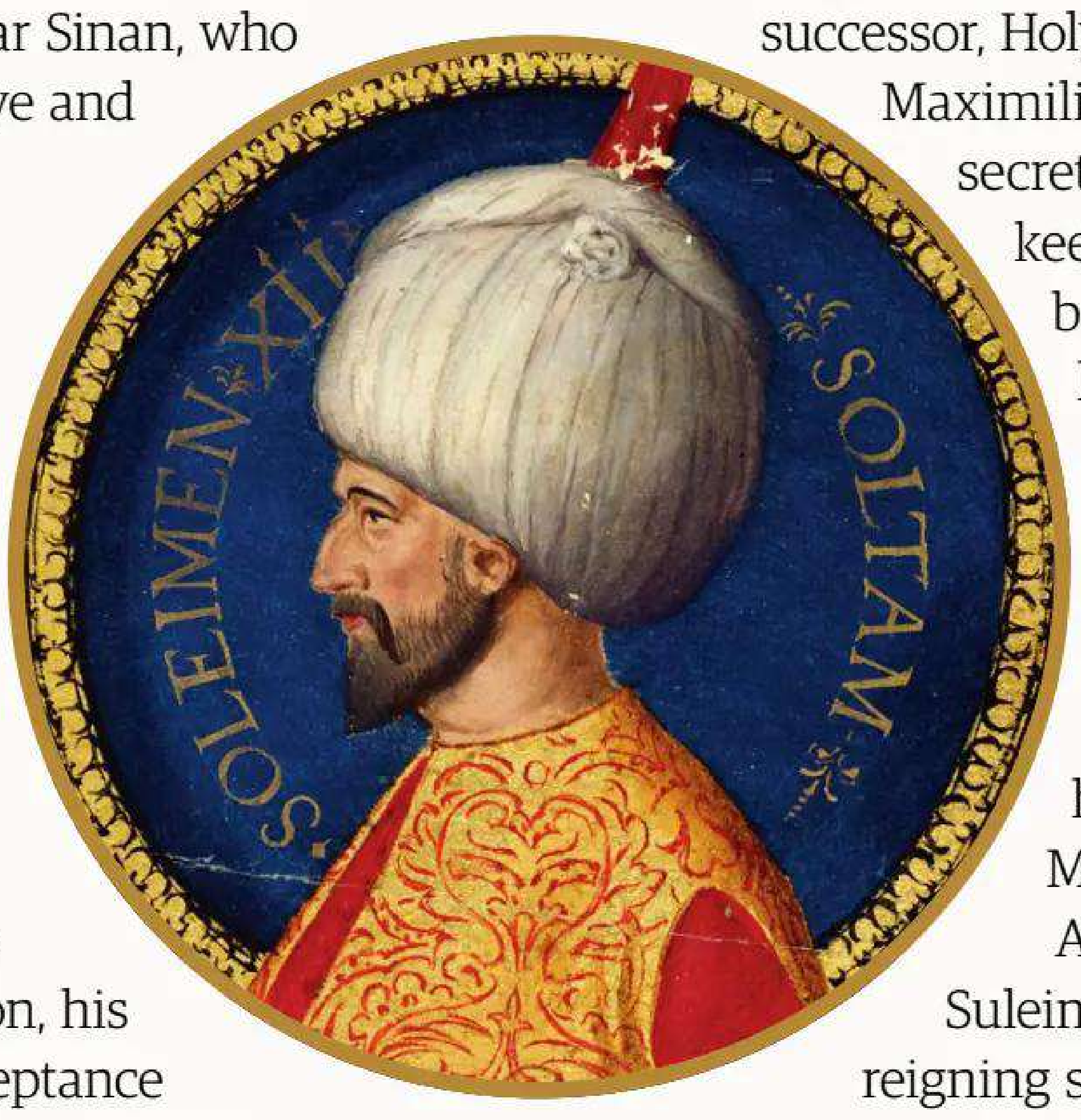
But Roxelana was an extraordinary woman. She was intelligent, ambitious, charitable and strategic. She was not only wife and queen, but for many years she served as Suleiman's chief advisor on matters of state and she played an influential role in foreign and domestic politics. She had numerous political rivals, namely Suleiman's loyal friend and advisor Ibrahim Pasha, with whom she was locked in a deadly battle for Suleiman's favour and from which she emerged triumphant.



Suleiman made the unprecedented move of making Roxelana his queen in 1530



John Sigismund of Hungary with Suleiman in 1556



In his youth, as with most sultans, Suleiman learned a trade, in his case goldsmithing, and he personally oversaw the work of craftsmen in Topkapı Palace. He also commissioned an ambitious building programme and was a patron of the great architect, Mimar Sinan, who built the iconic Süleymaniye and Selimiye Mosques.

Suleiman loved poetry and considered himself something of a poet, writing under the pseudonym 'Muhabbi', meaning 'beloved and affectionate friend'. His works have been described as "lyrical, mystical, humble and sincere" and he focused on the loneliness of his position, his love of his country, his acceptance of destiny and his love of beautiful things.

Above all, he wrote passionate poetry to the woman who would convert to Islam to be with him and transcend her lowly position to stand by his side as queen – Roxelana. Towards the end of his reign, however, Suleiman gave up his rich costumes, jewels, gold, wine, poetry and music.

Suleiman seemed to prefer religious humility in his old age. He died aged 72, fighting Charles' successor, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II. His death was kept secret lest it destroy morale. In keeping with tradition, his body was washed, hands laid across his chest, and his nose, eyes and ears were stuffed with cotton wool. He was then wrapped in a single piece of silk and buried in his beloved Süleymaniye Mosque facing Mecca.

At the time of his death, Suleiman was the longest-reigning sultan of the Ottoman Empire and he had outlived his European adversaries, with whom he had spent decades in enmity and alliance. Never again would the Ottoman Empire command such respect and admiration.

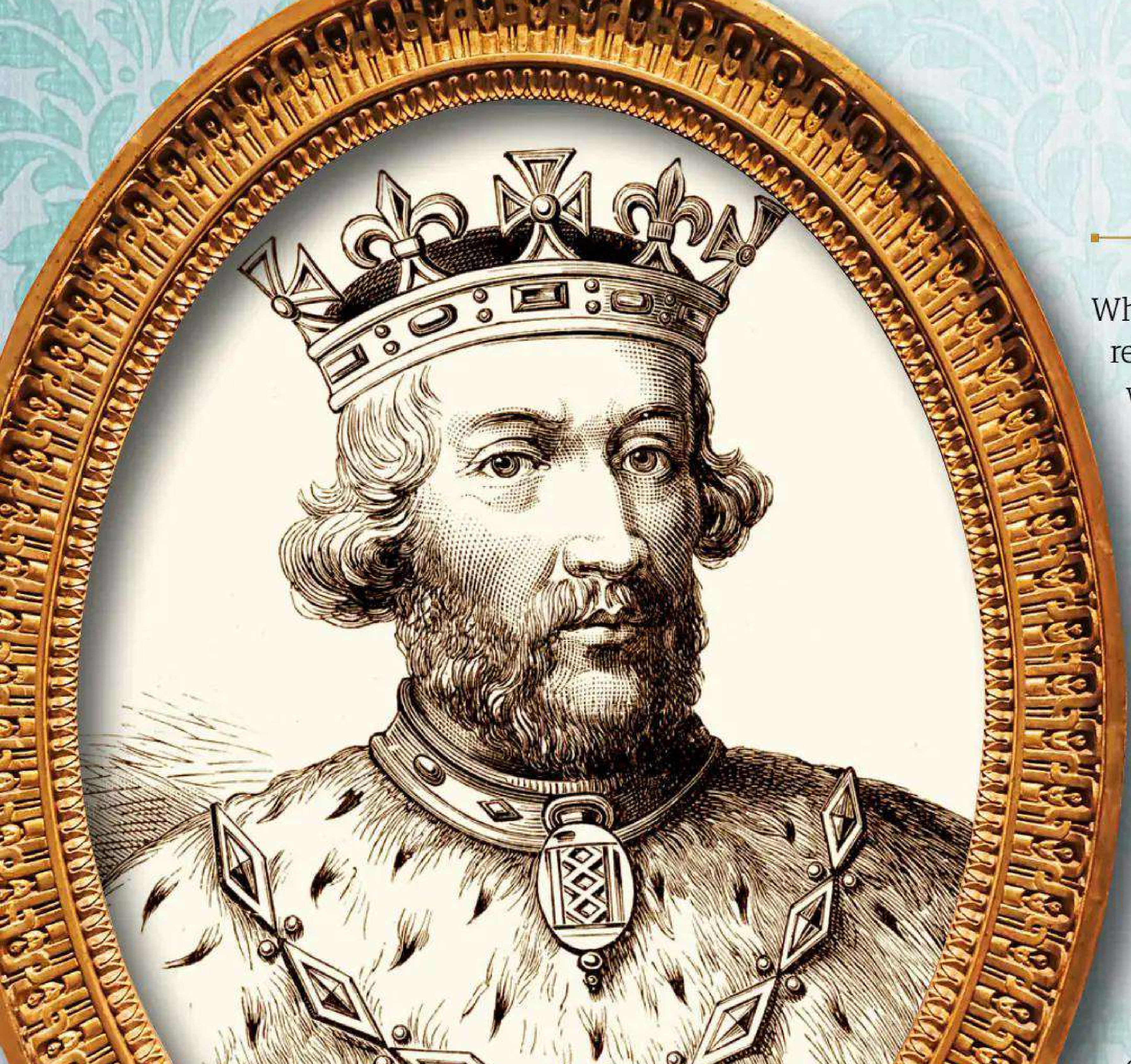
Images Getty Images (Roxelana, circle)

Deposed Kings

Discover the unfortunate monarchs prematurely kicked off the throne

Words **Scott Reeves**

In theory, every king rules until they take their last breath, after which the crown seamlessly transfers to the next generation. In reality, not every monarch gets such a happy ending. Some are booted out by their subjects, others are forced from the throne by foreign powers. A few were the last of their kind, and their nations chose a republican future. Kings without a kingdom may be permitted to live on in exile, but others were given a violent end. From medieval monarchs who fell out with their nobles, to 20th-century kings dethroned by world wars, meet the poor royals whose crowns slipped off their heads.



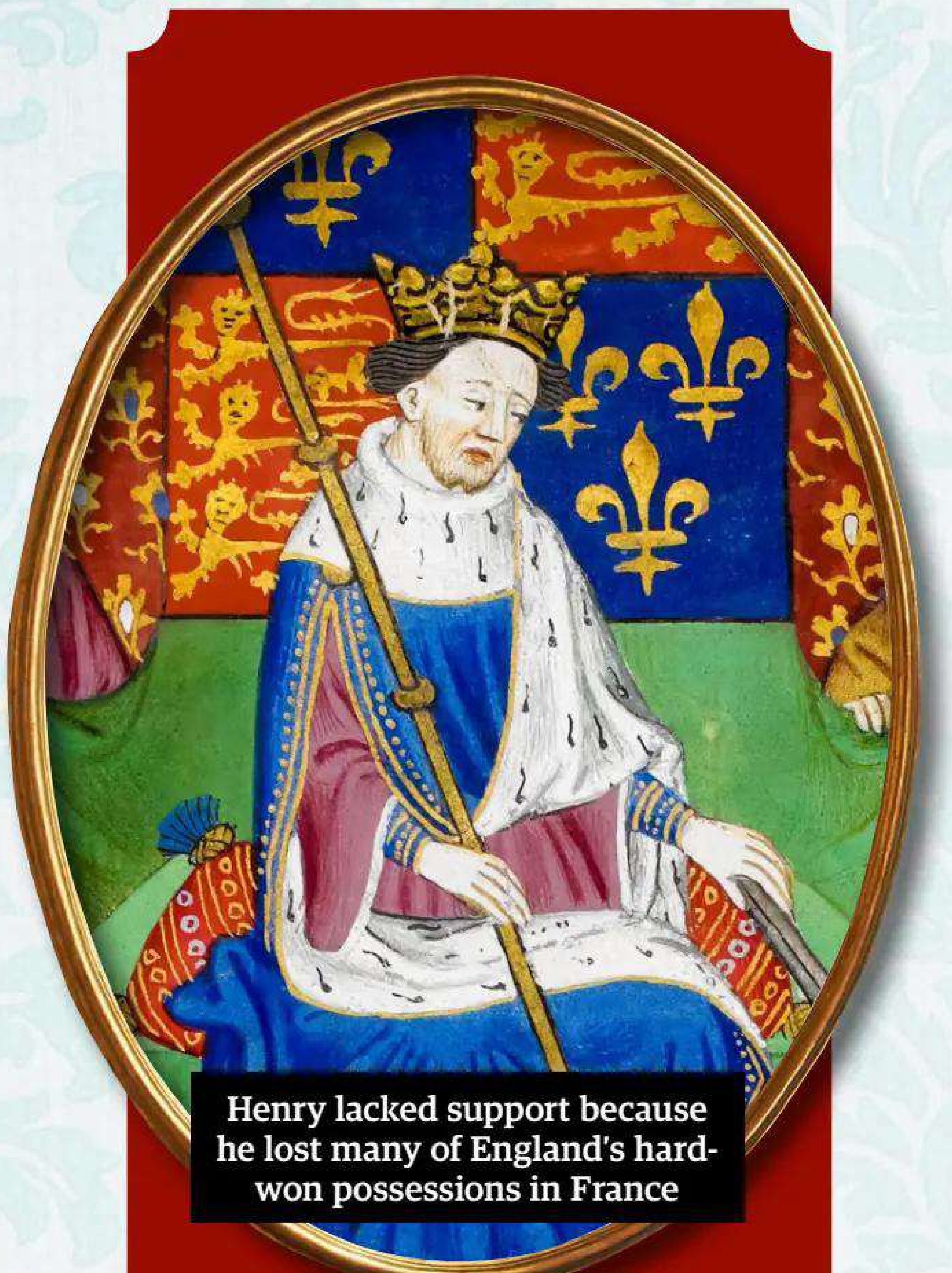
The story that Edward died by a red-hot poker up his backside was probably made up by propagandists

Edward II

Red-hot rebellion

England, 1307-1327

When Edward II acceded to the throne, royal relationships with England's powerful nobles were already strained. Unfortunately, Edward further antagonised the aristocracy by leaning heavily on the advice and support of his friend (and possible lover) Piers Gaveston. Nobles didn't like the favouritism - they exiled, and eventually executed, Gaveston. That caused Edward to seek solace with the powerful Despenser family, but Hugh Despenser was also arrested and killed. Eventually, the nobles came for Edward himself. Roger Mortimer raised an army and Edward fled to Wales, but he was captured and forced to abdicate in favour of his son, Edward III. When the younger Edward was confirmed on the throne, Edward II was no longer of any use and died in September 1327, probably murdered by the new regime.



Henry lacked support because he lost many of England's hard-won possessions in France

Henry VI

The Lancaster rose

England, 1422-1461, 1470-1471

Henry had proven himself a weak and lacklustre king by 1452, but things got much worse when he was suddenly struck down by a mental illness that left him unable to function. Richard, Duke of York, took advantage and began to scheme against the king, kicking off the Wars of the Roses. Richard's son took up the cause when his father was killed in battle and succeeded in deposing Henry. The new Edward IV was himself temporarily removed after the powerful Earl of Warwick switched sides, but Henry's return to the throne was short-lived. Henry was defeated at the Battle of Tewkesbury, and his son and heir was killed in the fighting. Edward IV was back on the hot seat, and within three weeks of his second reign commencing, Henry conveniently died in the Tower of London.

> *"Richard began to scheme… kicking off the Wars of the Roses"*

Images Alamy, Getty Images

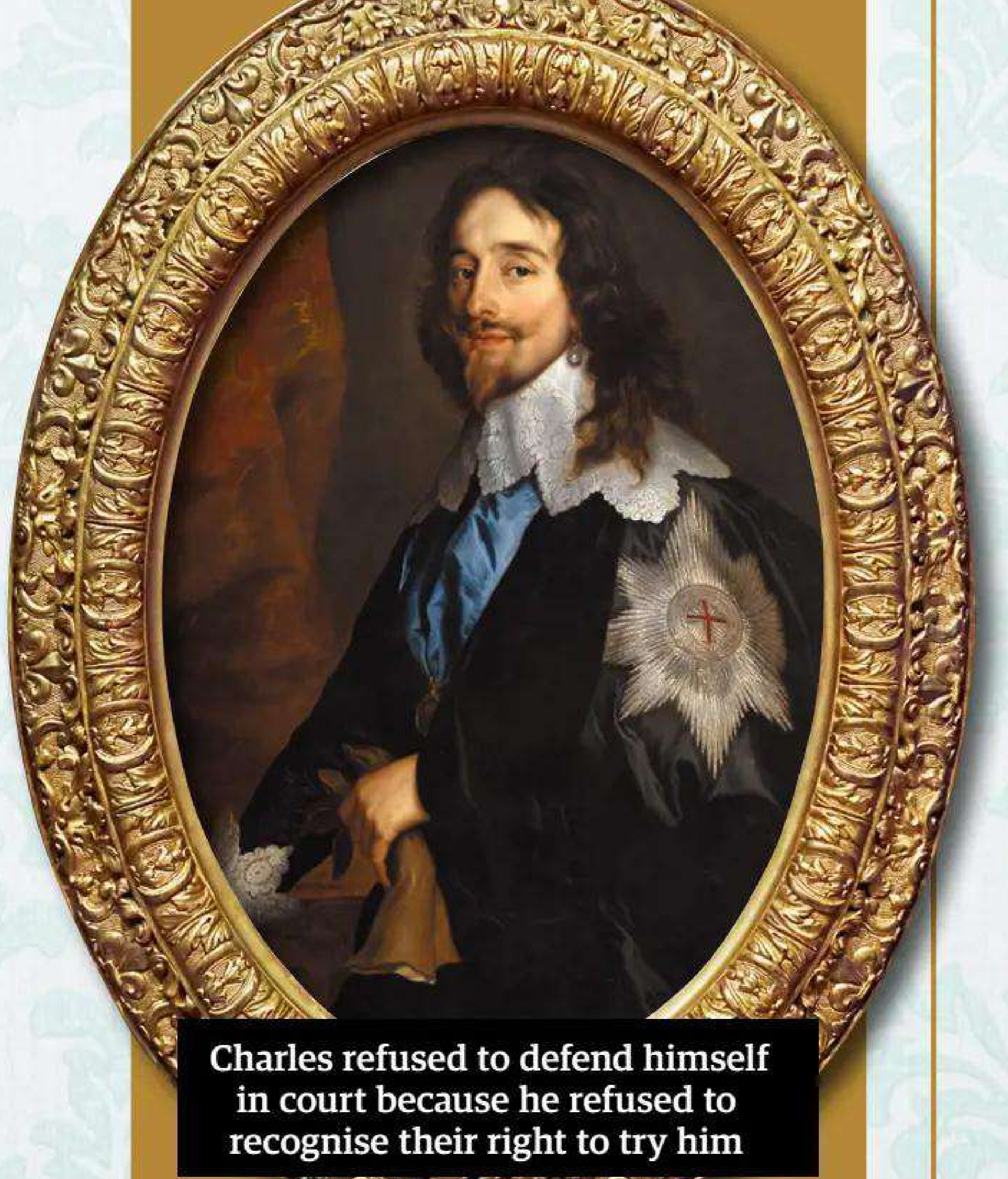
Charles I

The cavalier king

Britain, 1625-1649

Charles was a firm believer in the divine right of kings. Unfortunately, his subjects didn't agree that God alone decreed who ruled in England and Scotland. Charles began his reign by marrying an unpopular French princess, then dismissed Parliament after it tried to interfere with his policies. He ruled for 11 years as an absolute monarch, but he eventually had to recall Parliament when he ran short of cash. Both sides still differed on the fundamental issue of who had control, and the country slipped into a civil war. Ultimately, Charles's royal army was defeated and the king lost his head to an executioner's sword. Charles was not only deposed, but the whole monarchy went with him – for almost a decade, Britain would be ruled by common-born Oliver Cromwell.

> *"He eventually had to recall Parliament when he ran short of cash"*



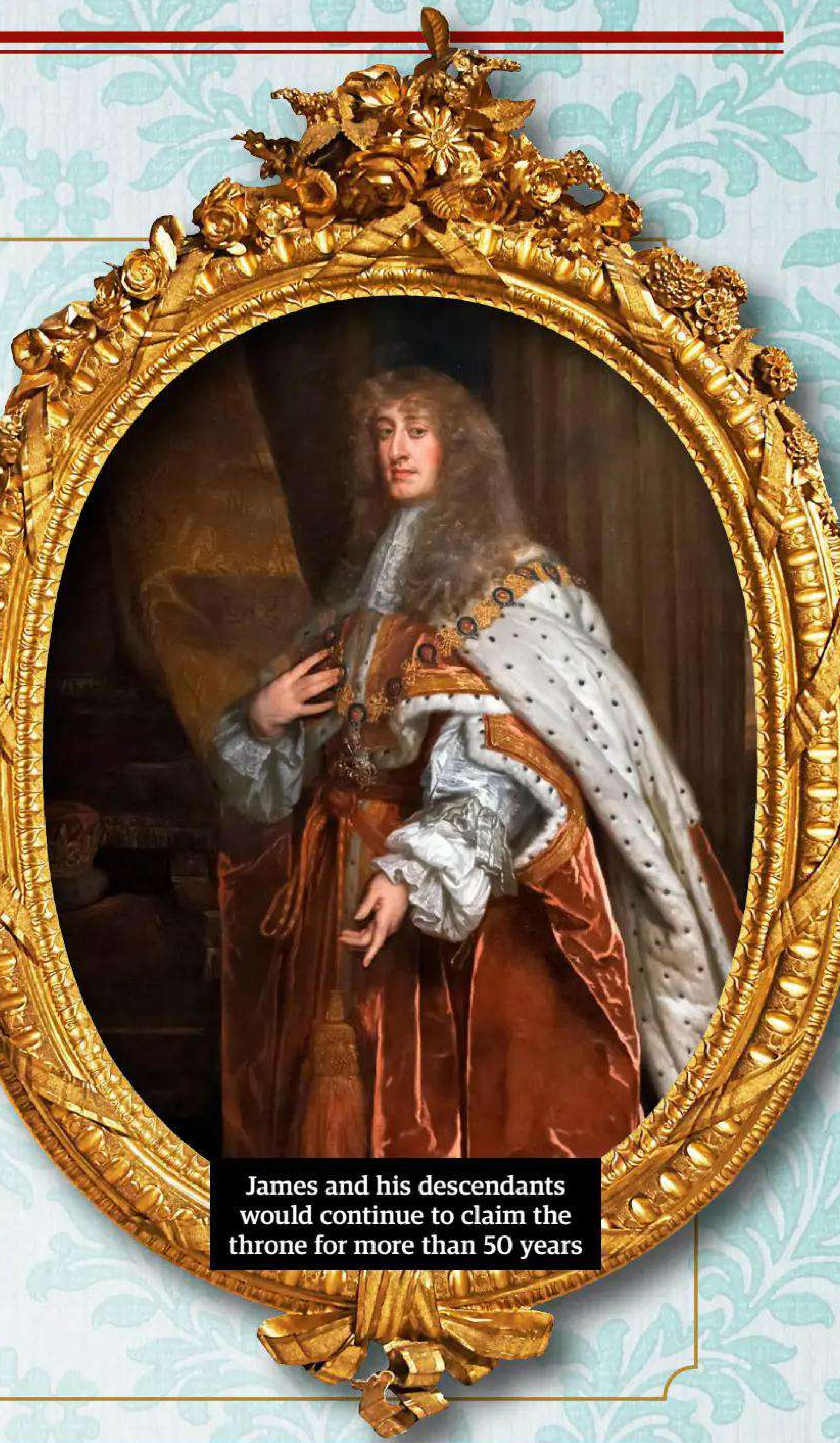
Charles refused to defend himself in court because he refused to recognise their right to try him

James II & VII

Inglorious monarch

Britain, 1685-1688

The biggest problem James's subjects had was their king's openly Catholic faith. At a time when Protestants and Catholics were still unable to live together in peace, the prospect of a Catholic dynasty on the throne was unbearable. After the birth of James's son and heir, the aristocracy decided to act. They invited James's Protestant daughter, Mary, to take the throne in his place, and she arrived in England with an army led by her Dutch husband, William of Orange. James's army refused to fight, James fled to the continent, and his country decided that he'd voluntarily vacated the throne. Mary and William took his place as England's first and only co-monarchs to conclude what was to become known as the Glorious Revolution.



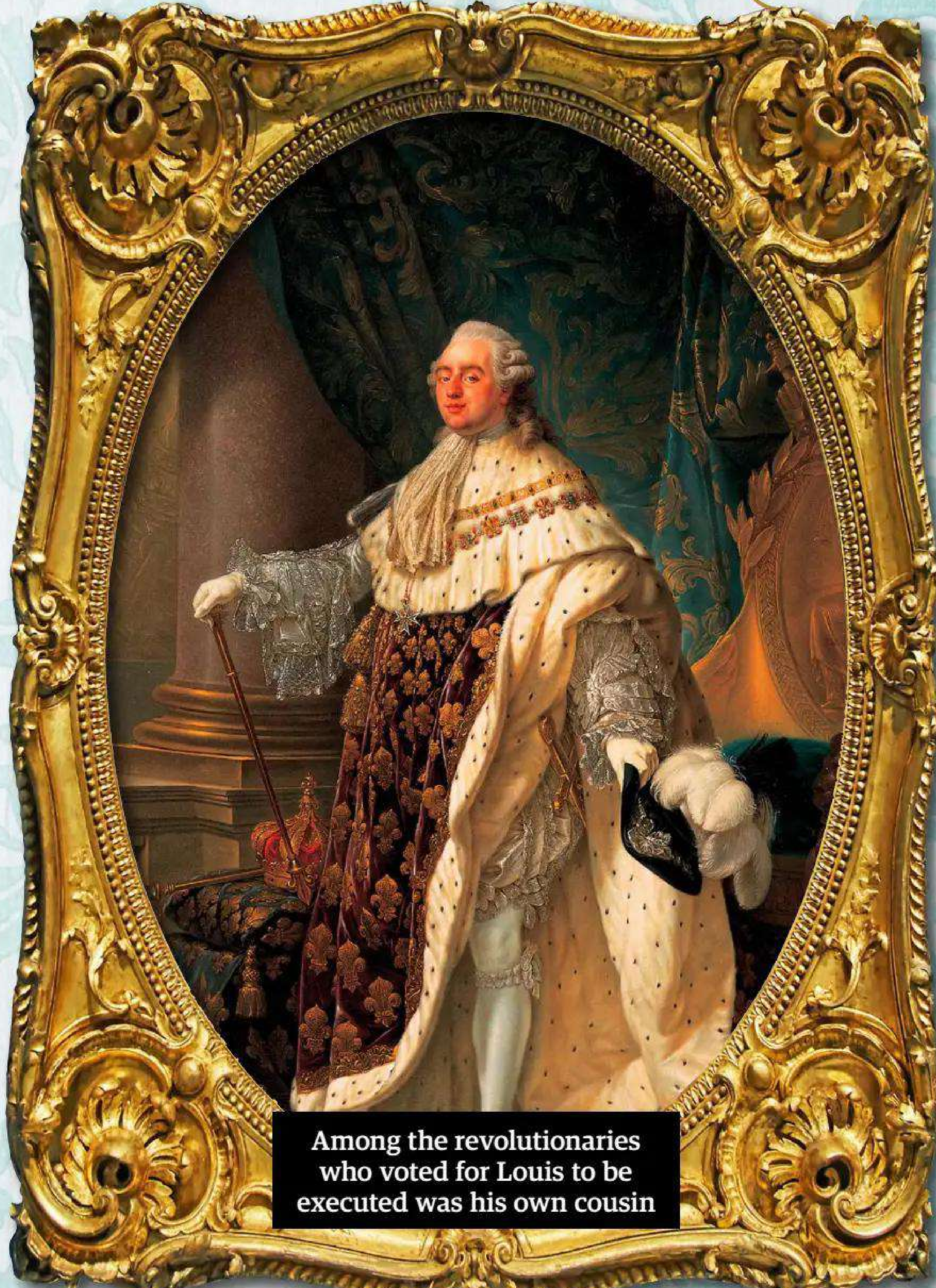
James and his descendants would continue to claim the throne for more than 50 years

Louis XVI

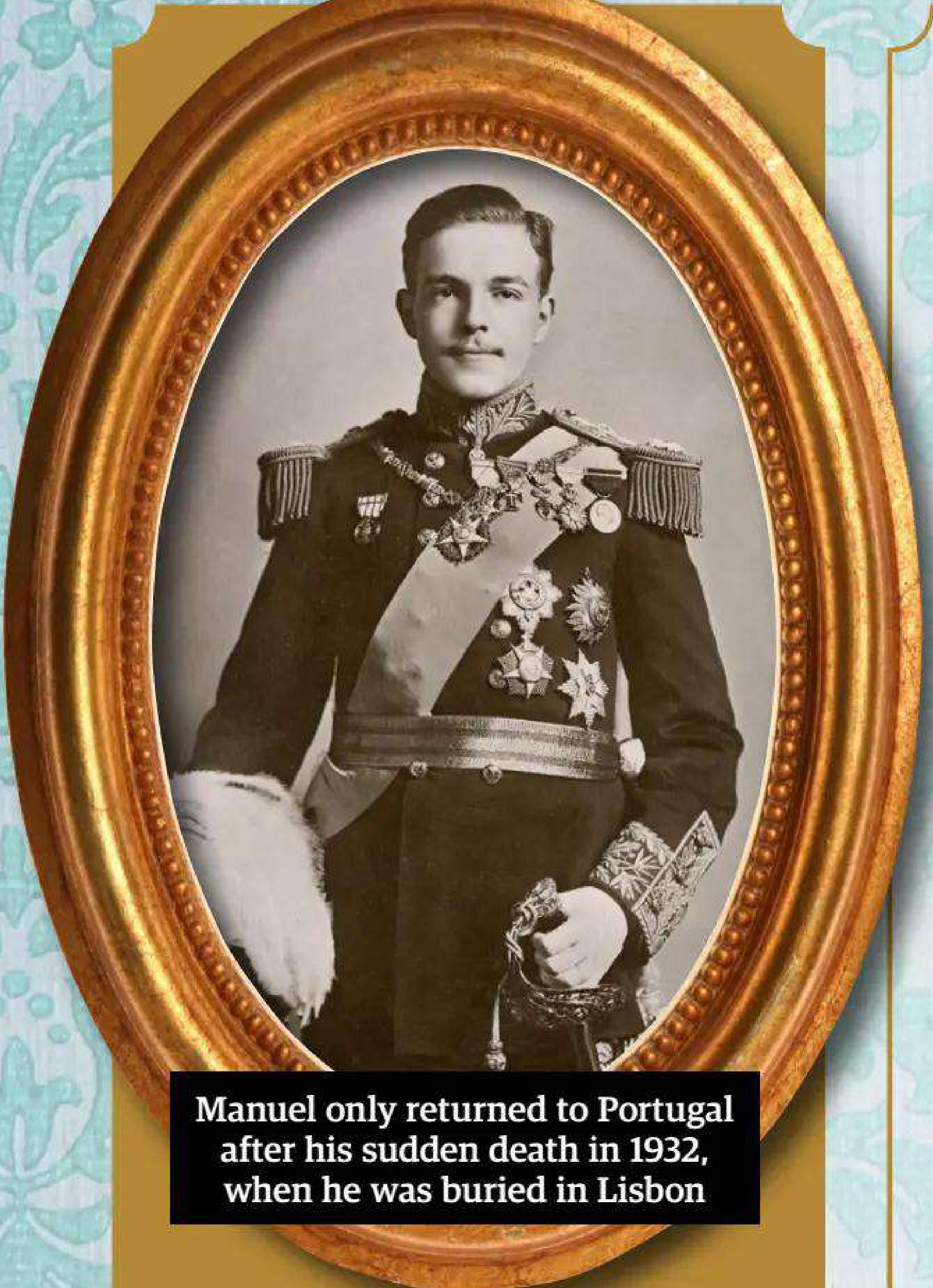
Madame Guillotine's victim

France, 1774-1792

When Louis supported the American colonists in their bid to win independence from Britain, it left his subjects wondering: why them and not us? Louis had opened a can of worms. France was still ruled by a largely autocratic monarchy, but the French people and nobles forced Louis to summon the Estates-General so they could air their grievances. It quickly descended into vehement criticism of Louis and his wife, Marie Antoinette, who were cast as ignorant and uncaring of their people's suffering. As political rhetoric became more radical, Louis and Marie Antoinette made an ill-advised dash from Paris, but were caught and returned in shame. Louis was arrested, tried and sentenced to be executed by guillotine as France slipped further into revolution and the monarchy was eventually abolished.



Among the revolutionaries who voted for Louis to be executed was his own cousin



Manuel only returned to Portugal after his sudden death in 1932, when he was buried in Lisbon

Manuel II

Designated survivor

Portugal, 1908-1910

Manuel wasn't meant to rule, but was thrust onto the throne after his family was attacked by assassins. His father and older brother were killed; Manuel survived with a gunshot wound to his arm. Still only 18 years old, Manuel requested the resignation of his unpopular prime minister and presented a newer, more popular form of monarchy. It wasn't enough to satisfy Portugal's republicans, though. The country suffered from chronic instability, with seven governments in two years, and the Republican Party grew in strength until its leaders launched a coup d'état. Manuel escaped on his royal yacht, which launched from a beach with the revolutionaries nearing. The ex-king spent the rest of his life in exile, hoping in vain that his nation would allow him to return.

> *"Manuel presented a newer, more popular form of monarchy. It wasn't enough"*

Nicholas II

The last tsar

Russia, 1894-1917

Nicholas inherited a Russian Empire that lagged behind its peers in Europe, and he pressed ahead with economic reforms designed to close the gap. Unfortunately, Nicholas also wanted to retain autocratic powers that had long been jettisoned in Britain, France and Germany, and he cracked down hard on his subjects after they rose up in the 1905 Revolution. Nicholas clung on for another 12 years, but WWI made life for Russians even more unbearable. A military mutiny in Petrograd forced Nicholas from the throne, but the revolutionaries were themselves overthrown nine months later by the Bolsheviks. The royal family served no purpose for the new regime, and Nicholas was executed with his family in the basement of the isolated house where they'd been imprisoned.

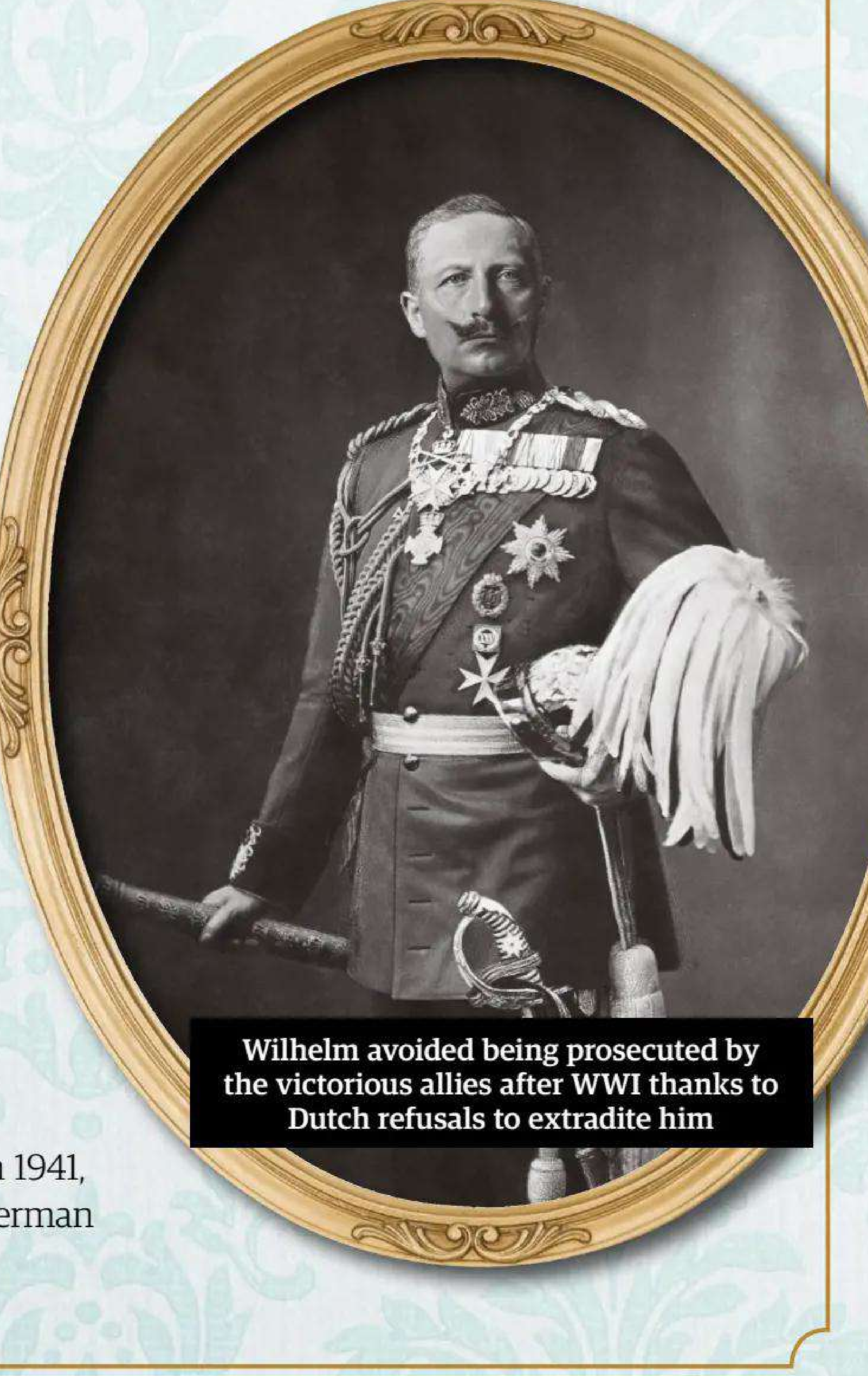
The bodies of Nicholas and his family were discovered in 1979 and formally identified using DNA in 1998

Wilhelm II

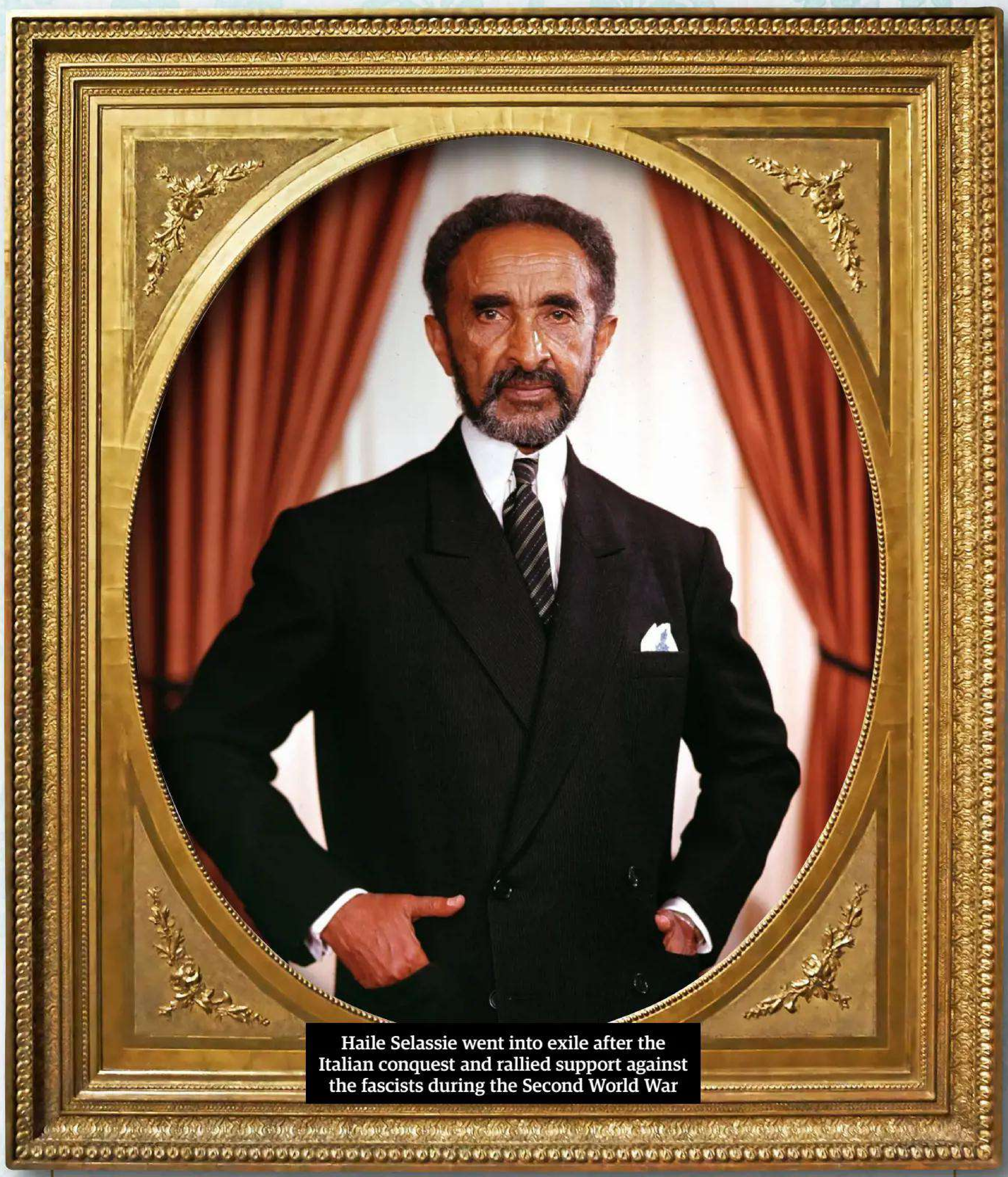
Kaiser Bill

Germany, 1888-1918

Wilhelm's enforced abdication marked the end of centuries of Hohenzollern rule in Prussia and Brandenburg - and he couldn't blame anybody else but himself. In March 1890, the 31-year-old kaiser dismissed experienced Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and directed his successors to make Germany a world power. Germany began to construct an empire, built up its armed forces and flexed its muscles on the world stage - but Germany's "new course" upset the balance of power. Wilhelm's brinksmanship helped transform a local conflict in the Balkans into the First World War, but he relinquished power to a military dictatorship during the war. After losing the support of both generals and his people, Wilhelm was overthrown in November 1918. He died in the Netherlands in 1941, when the land of his exile had come under German occupation in the Second World War.



Wilhelm avoided being prosecuted by the victorious allies after WWI thanks to Dutch refusals to extradite him



Haile Selassie went into exile after the Italian conquest and rallied support against the fascists during the Second World War

Haile Selassie I

Double deposed

Ethiopia,
1930-1936, 1941-1974

When Benito Mussolini decided he wanted a new Roman Empire, there were few places in Africa not already under the colonial control of a rival European power. The nation Mussolini decided to conquer was Abyssinia - modern Ethiopia - and Italian troops invaded in 1934, eventually deposing Haile Selassie and installing their own regime. Haile Selassie was restored to his throne after the Italians surrendered in 1941 and reigned for another three decades. He modernised Ethiopia but suppressed opposition and remained secure until a famine struck. Haile Selassie was accused of being out of touch with his people's suffering, and the 82-year-old emperor was removed for a second time in a military coup d'état. He died a year later, supposedly from complications following an operation, although military officers were later found guilty of his murder.

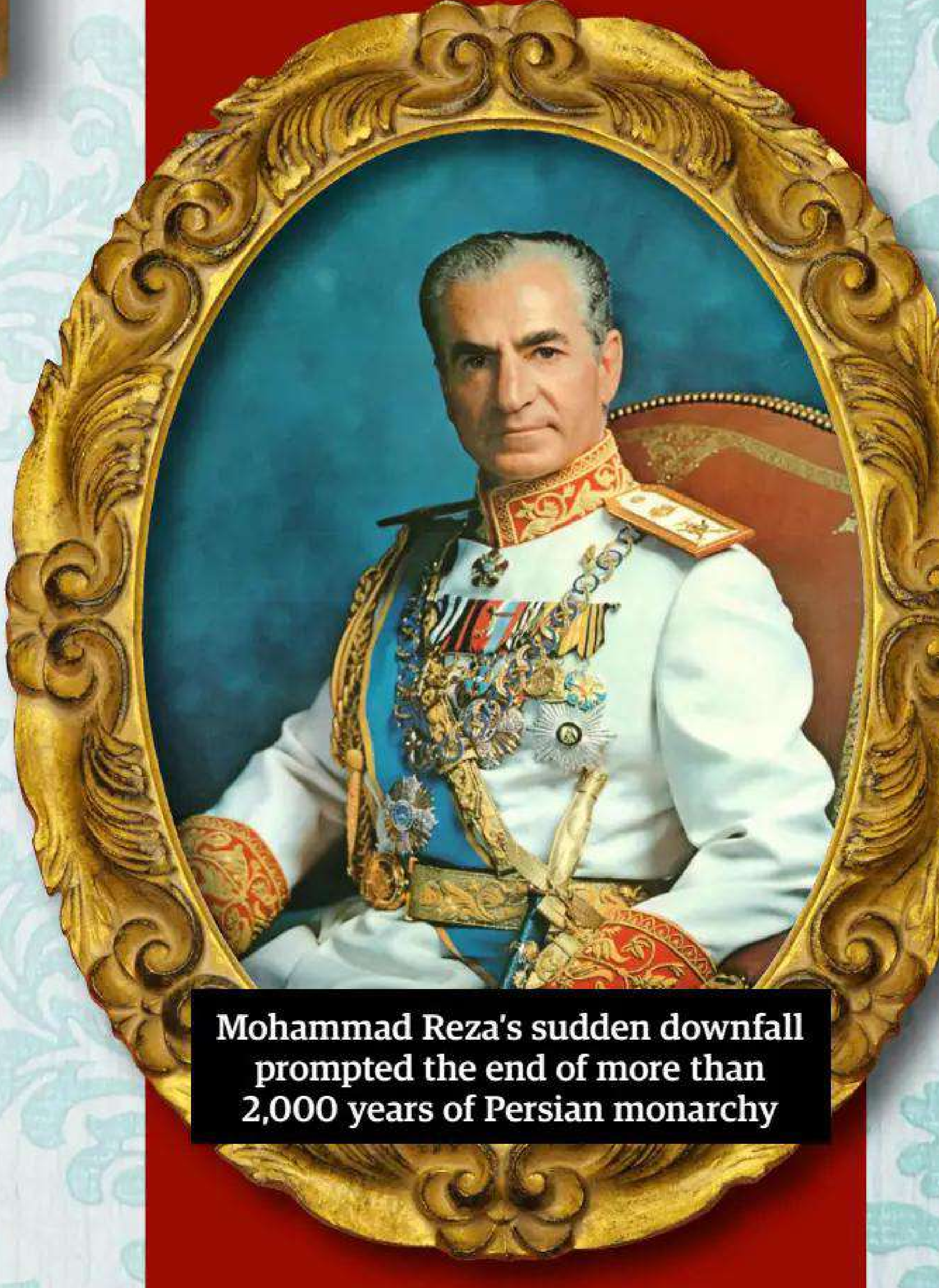
Mohammad Reza Pahlavi

The subjugated shah

Iran, 1941-1979

Mohammad Reza came to the throne during the Second World War after a joint Anglo-Soviet invasion forced the abdication of his father. He spent the rest of his reign trying to escape the influence of other world powers. The Shah tried to nationalise the oil industry, but a military coup sponsored by the UK and USA forced him to back down. After that, he pushed through a programme of nationalist modernisation known as the White Revolution, which succeeded in rapidly increasing Iran's economy and military. The Shah had a prominent role in OPEC that allowed him to control global oil prices, but growing political unrest at home saw him overthrown. Iran was transformed into an Islamic republic under Ruhollah Khomeini, while Mohammad Reza ended his life as an exile in Egypt.

"He pushed through a programme of modernisation"



Mohammad Reza's sudden downfall prompted the end of more than 2,000 years of Persian monarchy

Images: Alamy, Getty Images

Naresuan: Warrior King

A national hero in his native Thailand, Naresuan the Great defied Burma and conquered much of Southeast Asia in the 16th century

Words **David Roos & Jessica Leggett**

It says something that the film series *The Legend of King Naresuan* is one of the most expensive movie projects in Thai history. The action-packed, six-part historical epic, which celebrates the larger-than-life conquests of Somdej Phra Naresuan Maharaj – otherwise known as Naresuan the Great – cost more than £14.8 million ($20 million) to produce.

With financial backing from the Thai state, the movie chronicles how Naresuan, a 16th-century warrior king, threw off the shackles of the detested Burmese occupation and established an independent state that was a strong political and military force in Southeast Asia. To understand Naresuan's importance in Thai history, you need to appreciate the political dynamics of 16th-century Southeast Asia. Firstly, the country we now know as Thailand didn't exist until the 20th century. Instead, the region was made up of a series of Thai kingdoms, known collectively in the West as Siam, the largest and most powerful of which was Ayutthaya.

Dubbed the 'Venice of the East', Ayutthaya was a walled city of intersecting canals that floated like a fortified island in between three converging rivers. Its walls and rivers defended it against attack while its culture flourished, producing remarkable Buddhist-themed architecture, as well as art and music that were influenced by both East and West. Fertile rice fields surrounded the city and Ayutthaya grew rich exporting rice to European traders and China, the reigning superpower of East Asia.

However, the kingdom was literally surrounded by enemies: Burma lay to the northwest, Cambodia and the Khmer to the southeast, and disparate tribal states had made their homes to the east and north. But Burma was by far the most potent threat. The ruling Toungoo dynasty had spent the last two generations conquering smaller states to amass an empire.

REGIME CHANGE

In 1548, the Ayutthaya kingdom had managed to repel a formidable attack but the Burmese king, Bayinnaung, returned in 1564 with an even larger force, which included hundreds of Portuguese mercenaries.

Ayutthaya fell under Burmese control. The city was pillaged and thousands were deported to Burma as slaves – but the regime change worked in favour of Naresuan's family. King Bayinnaung got rid of Ayutthaya's ruler, Maha Chakkraphat, and put Naresuan's father, Maha Thammarachathirat, a high-ranking nobleman, on the throne instead. However, as a pledge of his allegiance, the new king was forced to send his two sons – Naresuan, then aged nine, and his younger brother, Ekathotsarot – to be raised in the Burmese capital of Pegu.

A hostage in the Burmese court for seven years, Naresuan may have spent his time studying Buddhist philosophy. He was also an avid pupil of Burmese and Portuguese military tactics, and hand-to-hand combat.

In 1571, when Naresuan turned 16, King Bayinnaung allowed the prince to return home in exchange for

"As the first-born son, expectations were high for the young prince"

One of the many stupas, or Buddhist shrines, erected in honour of Naresuan. This one, in the Chiang Dao district, was built to mark the king's stay in 1604

his sister's hand in marriage. Young Naresuan was put in charge of the northern city of Phitsanulok as the Uparat, or presumptive heir, to the throne of Ayutthaya.

Naresuan was in an unusual political position. Raised in Burma as a prisoner-prince, he both resented and respected the Thai people's feudal overlords. Some even claim that Naresuan loved Bayinnaung like a father. If Thailand's champion had early dreams of rebellion he hid them well, biding his time and pledging his loyalty to Burma.

Ironically, it was during a show of this loyalty that Naresuan got himself into trouble. After Bayinnaung's death, Nanda Bayin became king of Burma in 1581, and Naresuan was sent by his father to pay homage and express the Thai kingdom's unwavering allegiance.

To test this fealty, Nanda Bayin recruited Naresuan and his army to quash a rebellion in the Shan states to the north. When Nanda Bayin and his troops failed to take a key city, Naresuan swept in to conquer it. Instead of showing the king that Naresaun could be a trusted ally, the act embarrassed and enraged him.

Naresuan returned to his home in Phitsanulok but he was quickly summoned by Nanda Bayin a second time to help put down another uprising. Naresuan dutifully assembled his troops – but not without his suspicions. Word had reached him that the Burmese were constructing a road to Ayutthaya, a sign that the king was looking for ways to tighten his grip on the kingdom.

As Naresuan marched towards Pegu, he was intercepted by two Mon warriors. The Mon people had developed close links with the Ayutthaya kingdom, as after their capital had been conquered by the Burmese army, many Mon people had sought refuge there. The two warriors warned Naresuan of Nanda Bayin's secret plan to ambush and kill him.

Naresuan had played the loyal puppet for long enough and now that he knew of the Burmese plot to assassinate him, there was no need for him to retain (or feign) such fealty. The time had come for Naresuan to become the leader that his people so desperately needed.

HAIL TO THE NEW KING

To win Ayutthaya's independence back, Naresuan formally renounced his allegiance to Burma in 1584, declaring an end to the Burmese tributary. When Naresuan returned to Ayutthaya, his royal father entrusted him with the city's protection and with building an army ready to answer the full strength and anger of the Burmese. Naresuan took advantage of the widespread disaffection with Burmese bullying in the region by recruiting troops from the Shan and Mon states.

King Nanda Bayin quickly sent his army to Ayutthaya, but Naresuan repelled the first attack easily, along with the second and third Burmese attempts in the years that followed. Even the Khmer tried their luck, hoping to capitalise on Thai entanglements with Burma. Incredibly, Naresuan not only held off this offensive but pursued his attackers all the way back to the walls of Lovek, the Khmer capital. He only turned back because his supplies had run out.

In 1590, King Maha Thammarachathirat died, making Naresuan the king of Ayutthaya. While he devoted some of his energy to centralising political power and reforming the traditional patronage system enjoyed by princes, he also acted as a diplomat and ambassador, signing trade agreements with Portugal and Spain. But Naresuan's greatest talents were as a savvy military strategist and cunning warrior.

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Thai stamps commemorating King Naresuan riding on an elephant from 1955

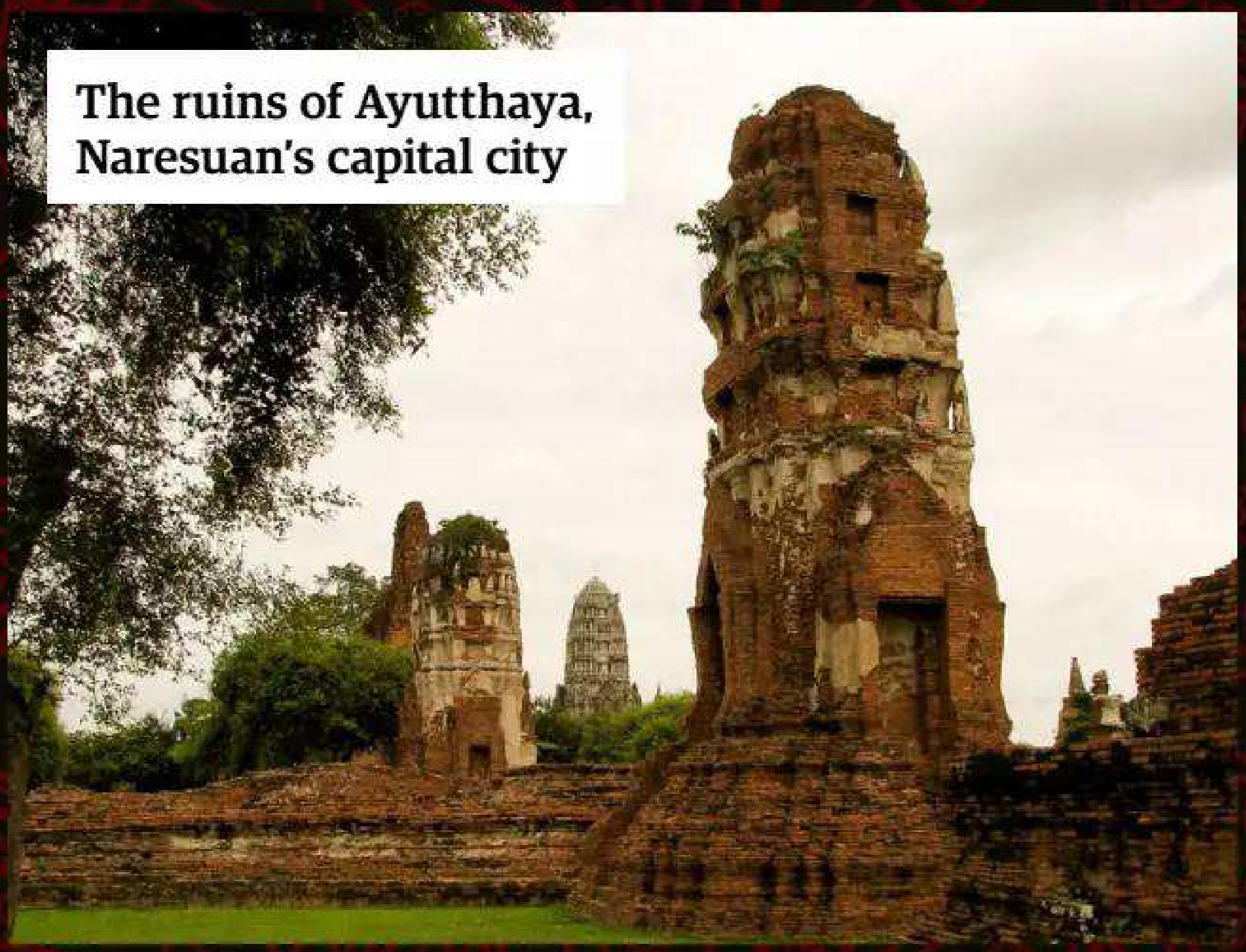
THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

Naresuan's greatest moment came during a last-ditch attempt by the Burmese army to crush the rebellious Ayutthaya kingdom in 1593. The warrior king's spies sent word that Nanda Bayin's army was on the move again, led by his eldest son, Mingyi Swa. Thai legend suggests that Swa might have been Naresuan's old rival, and that they may have sparred during those hand-to-hand combat lessons of his youth. However, Swa was three years younger than Naresuan and there's no hard evidence that says they fought until this fateful day.

Naresuan marched his army west to intercept the enemy forces that were

“Naresuan quickly dispatched his rival with a mortal slash”

A statue of King Bayinnaung of Burma, who held Naresuan hostage for seven years


The ruins of Ayutthaya, Naresuan’s capital city

descending from the dramatic Three Pagodas Pass. The two armies met near the small village of Nong Sarai and engaged in a bloody, drawn-out battle that initially favoured the Burmese. However, the tide turned when Naresuan, mounted on his battle elephant, allegedly challenged Swa.

“Come forth, and let us fight an elephant duel for the honour of our kingdoms”, he jeered at his opponent. The two men faced off atop their trusty steeds, armed with razor-sharp war scythes and surrounded by their battle-weary armies. Dodging an errant joust by Swa, Naresuan quickly dispatched his rival with a mortal slash. Their leader died before their eyes and the Burmese fled.

The battle proved to be a critical turning point in the long-standing Burmese-Thai conflict. Before Nanda Bayin could conscript new forces to avenge his son’s death, civil war broke out among contenders for the crown prince’s throne. Sensing an opportunity, Naresuan turned the tables on the Burmese and sent generals to capture their territory. Siam claimed port cities in the coastal Burmese region of Tenasserim, winning unrestricted military and trade access to the Indian Ocean.

Emboldened, the sovereign then invaded Cambodia, toppling the Khmer king and returning to Ayutthaya with thousands of prisoners of war to repopulate Northern Thailand.

At the very spot of his famous victory at Nong Sarai, Naresuan ordered the building of a pagoda (or chedi in Thai), a version of which still exists today. Before his death in 1605 during a military campaign, he also led army expeditions deep into a greatly weakened Burma, through the now-ruined capital of Pegu up to Toungoo. Setting his sights northwards, the Siamese king brought the old fortified city of Chiang Mai under Ayutthaya’s influence.

LASTING LEGACY

Aside from his military achievements, Naresuan was highly skilled at the dangerous game of diplomacy. He had developed a favourable relationship with the Ming dynasty and China, the superpower of 16th-century Asia. However, China had found itself in the sights of the Japanese, whose navy conquered the Korean Peninsula in 1592. Eager to make a strategic show of loyalty, Naresuan sent an emissary to China in order to pledge the military support of his kingdom. He knew that the offer would likely be refused – which it was – but his actions assured China’s protection of lucrative Thai trade routes.

Naresuan was only around 50 years old when he died, potentially from disease during a campaign in the Shan States to Ayutthaya’s north. Despite his early death, his heroics on the battlefield cemented Ayutthaya as the undisputed power in Southeast Asia for the next century. When his younger brother, Ekathotsarot, took the throne, he continued Naresuan’s important work, establishing trade relations with Goa, Japan and the Netherlands for the first time.

Every year on 18 January, the day of Naresuan’s victory at Nong Sarai, Thailand celebrates its National Armed Forces Day. Locals will lay flowers at the feet of Naresuan statues, showing their undying gratitude to him for winning independence. In 1990, a college in Phitsanulok was renamed Naresuan University to celebrate the 400th anniversary of his ascension to the throne. Clearly, the legend of Naresuan the Great is more than a great action-movie plot – it’s the story of a people’s first taste of freedom and power in the early modern age.

Life in the time of Naresuan

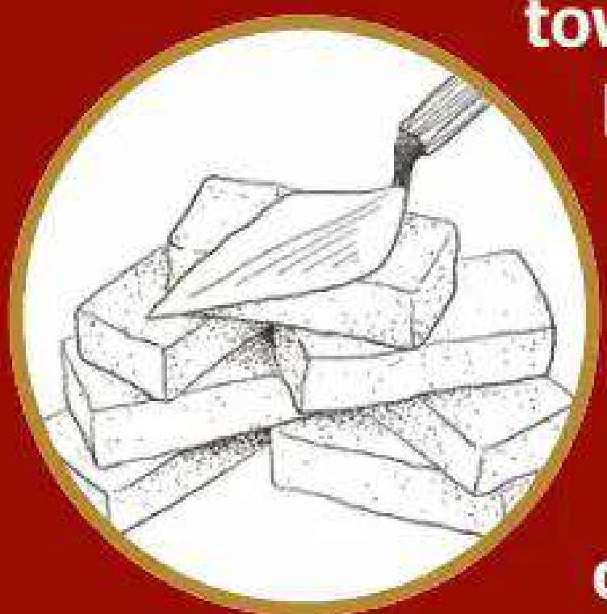
EAST MEETS WEST

Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama, one of the most successful explorers of the Age of Discovery, became the first European to sail a sea route to India in 1498, landing in Calicut. Successions of Portuguese armadas established a spice route and a colony in India. Naresuan wisely nurtured healthy trade relations with Portugal as well as the Spanish Philippines to the benefit of his own nation and its peoples.

CROWN OF THAI CIVILISATION

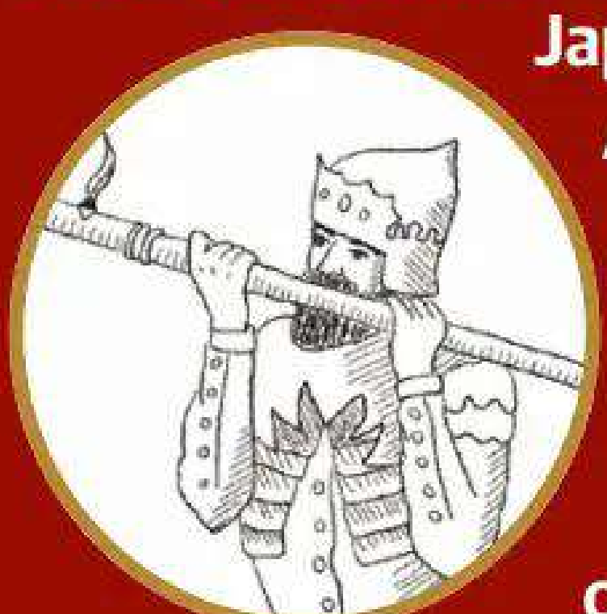
The city of Ayutthaya flourished from the 14th to the 18th century and at its height was one of the world’s largest and most technologically advanced cities with a population far greater then any other metropolis in South East Asia. The island city was protected by three rivers and saved from floods thanks to a remarkably innovative hydraulic system.

AYUTTHAYA ARCHITECTURE



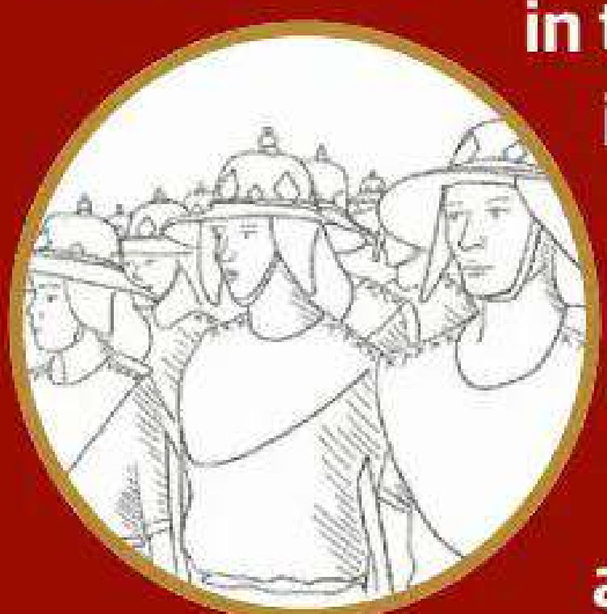
When the Burmese sacked and burned Ayutthaya in 1767 during the Burmese–Siamese War that had started in 1765, they left only the ruins of a few Buddhist monasteries. These otherworldly stone towers and intricately carved bas-relief sculptures have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Ayutthaya Historical Park is made up of the ruins of the former capital of the kingdom of Siam.

GUN POWER



The Chinese invented gunpowder in the 9th century and crafted the first crude firearms or ‘hand cannons’ shortly after, but it was the Portuguese musket that was widely adopted by Japanese, Korean and Southeast Asian armies in the 16th century. They became a cornerstone of the Ming army only after its conquest of China, giving Ming armies a distinct advantage over their neighbours.

MING SUPERPOWER



The Ming dynasty, also called the Empire of the Great Ming, ruled China from 1368 to 1644 and extended its borders from Outer Mongolia in the north down to Vietnam in the south. China exuded tremendous political and military influence in the region during Naresuan’s rule. At its zenith the empire’s standing army exceeded 1 million troops.

Images Shutterstock, Norbert Nagel/CC BY-SA 3.0 (ruins), Phyo WP/CC BY-SA 3.0 (statue)

Cult of the Sun King

Did Louis XIV's lust for power sow the seeds of revolution?

Words **Melanie Clegg**

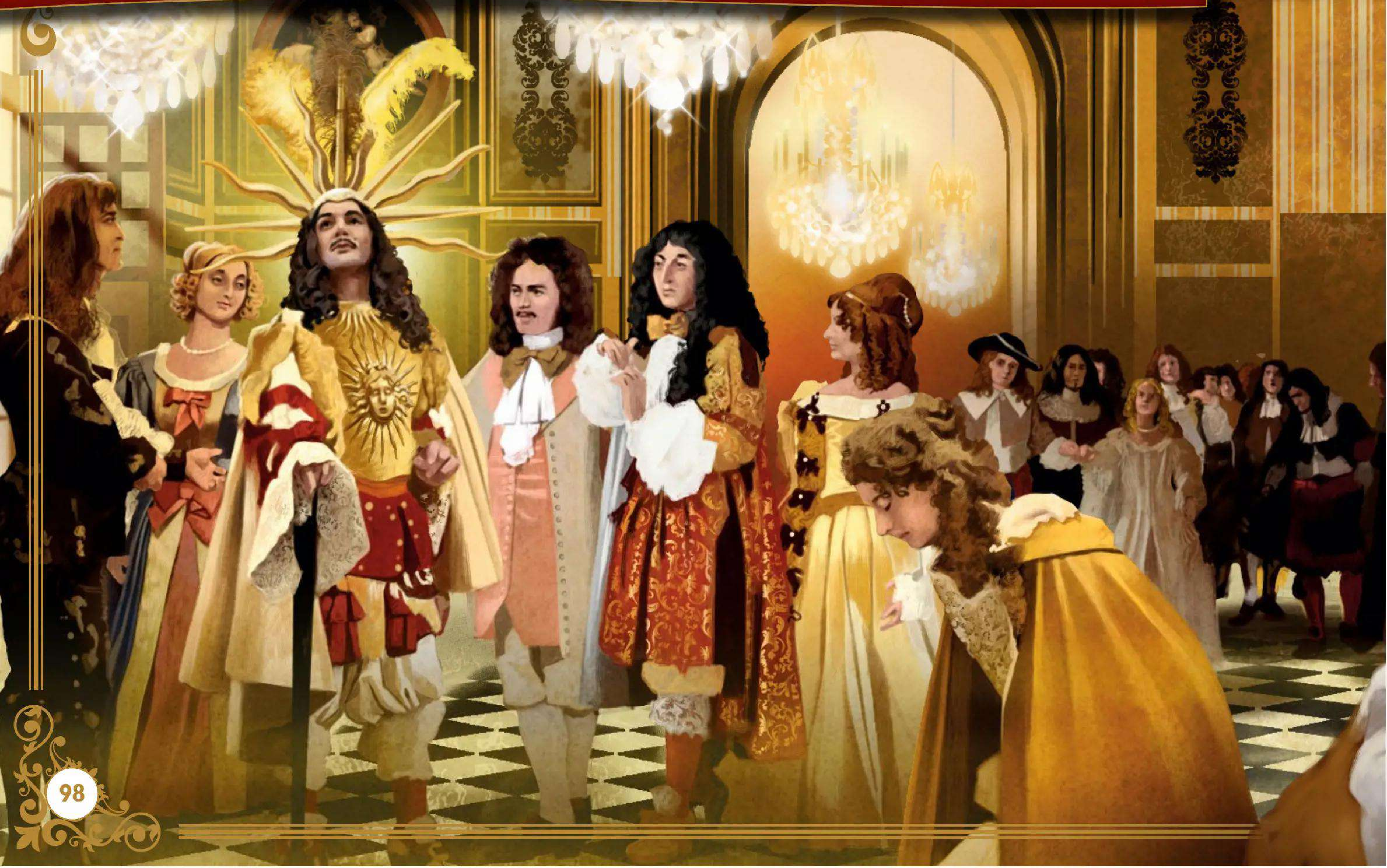


Illustration Joe Cummings

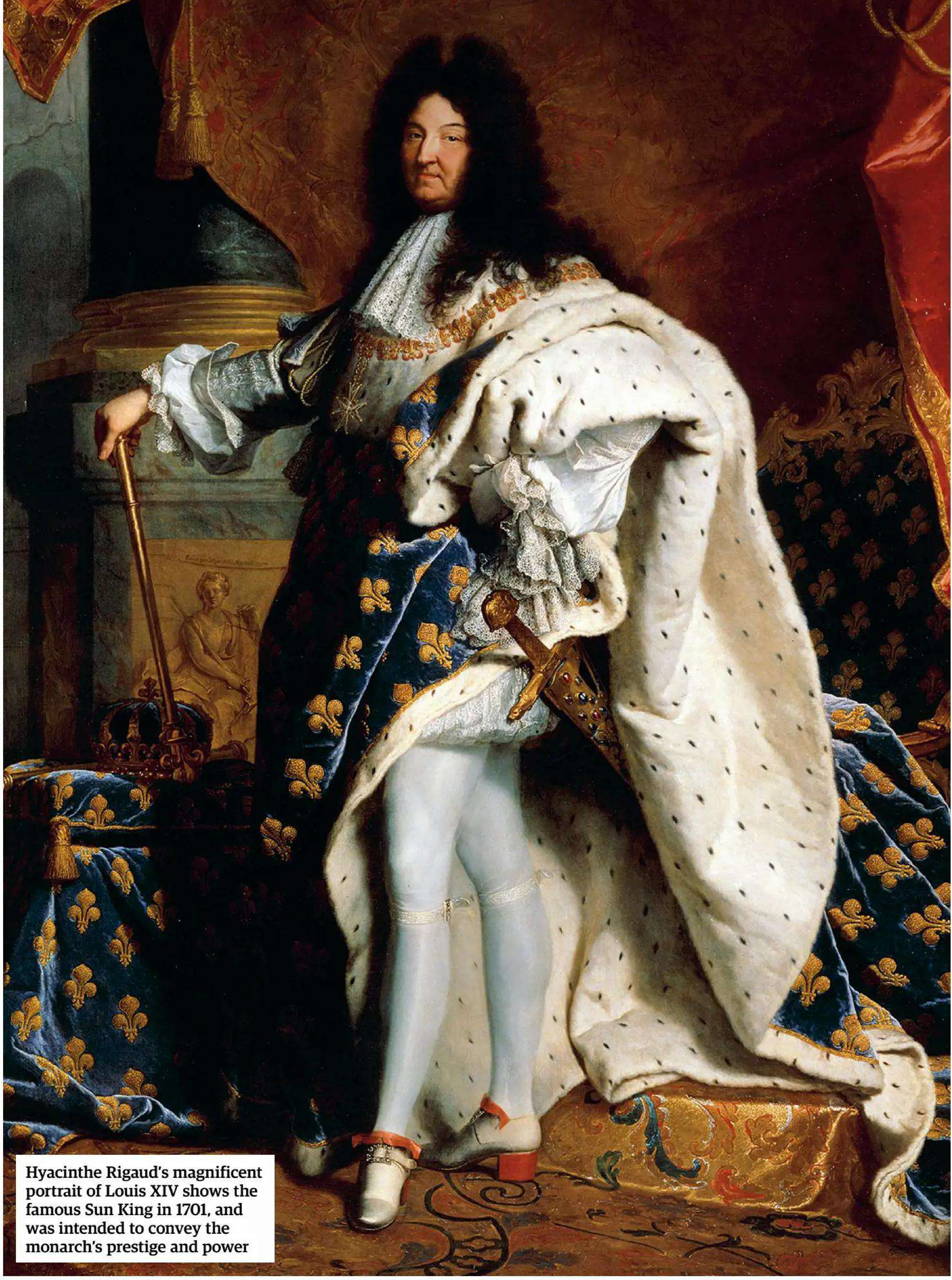
In th the early hours of 6 January 1649, ten-year-old Louis XIV and his younger brother Philippe were woken up and hustled into a carriage that was waiting outside their apartments in the Palais Royal in Paris. Accompanied by their mother and Louis' regent, Queen Anne, the two boys were whisked away to the safety of Louis' birthplace, the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, just outside Paris, only to discover that it was unprepared for their arrival. The reason for their hasty flight from Paris was the Fronde uprising, a violent civil war that broke out in the spring of 1648 because of a bitter stand-off between the crown and the parliament of Paris, inflamed by the Queen's chief minister Cardinal Mazarin's efforts to fund the Thirty Years War, which involved raising taxes and impinged on the fiscal privileges enjoyed by the nobility for centuries.

For Louis, who had been King of France since the age of four, this flight from Paris was both an exciting adventure and a sobering reminder of just how fickle his people could be. He loathed being cooped up at Saint-Germain, and although he was not yet able to participate in council meetings, he quickly became aware that his current plight was primarily the fault of the parliament and nobility, which led him to view them with a deep resentment.

This feeling was compounded when just a few weeks later, his uncle by marriage, Charles I of England, was executed in London after a similar disagreement between the crown and parliament had spiralled out of control, ending in a bloody civil war and the loss of his throne. The presence of Charles I's impoverished widow Henrietta Maria and her youngest children, who were financially supported by Louis' mother and living on the fringes of the French court, was further evidence of how low royalty could fall if they failed to control their rebellious subjects. Charles I had been a proponent of the doctrine known as the Divine Right of Kings, which asserted that monarchs were divinely appointed by God and therefore subject to no Earthly authority, including that of their parliament.

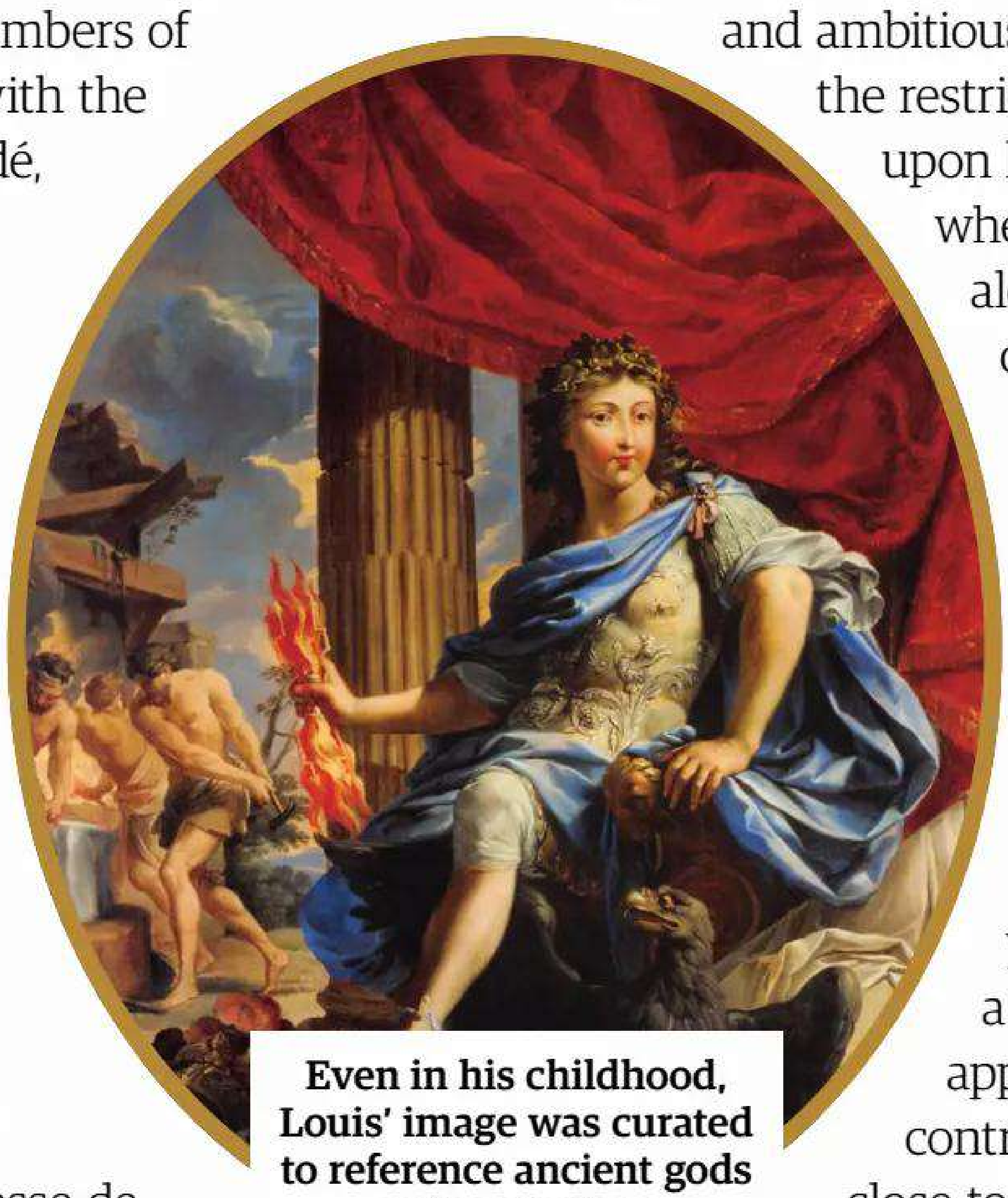
This belief had led to Charles's autocratically dismissive handling of his parliament and ultimate downfall and execution, yet to the spoiled and adored Louis, whose birth was seemingly miraculous after his parents had been married and fruitlessly attempting to produce an heir for 23 years, the theory apparently made perfect sense. The belief that he alone was appointed to rule France would crystallise through Louis' childhood and adolescence, boosted by the ongoing Fronde rebellion, which dragged on until 1659 and fostered both his intense dislike of Paris and a serious distrust of the French nobility.

> *"This feeling that he alone was divinely appointed to rule over France would crystallise throughout Louis' childhood and adolescence"*

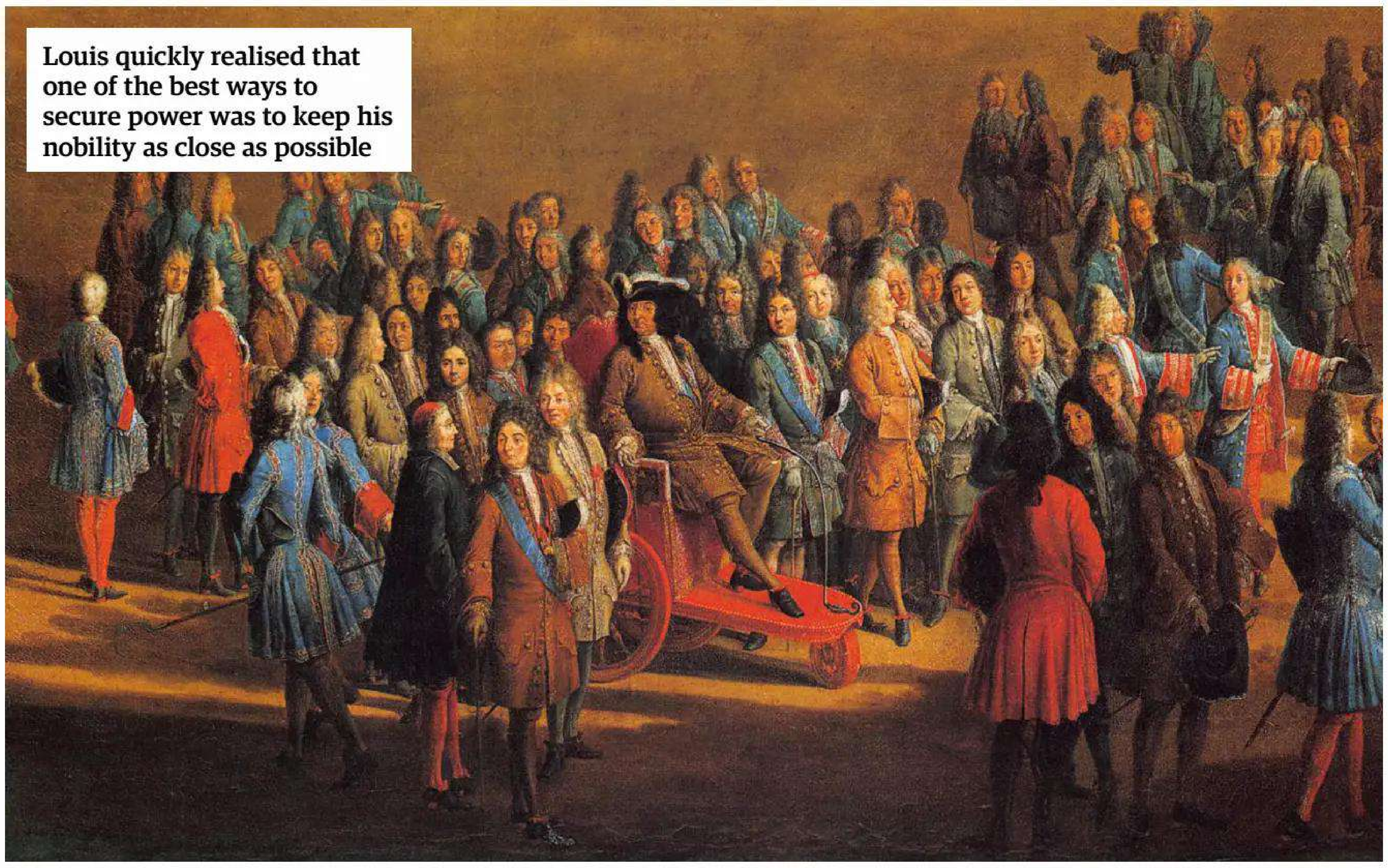


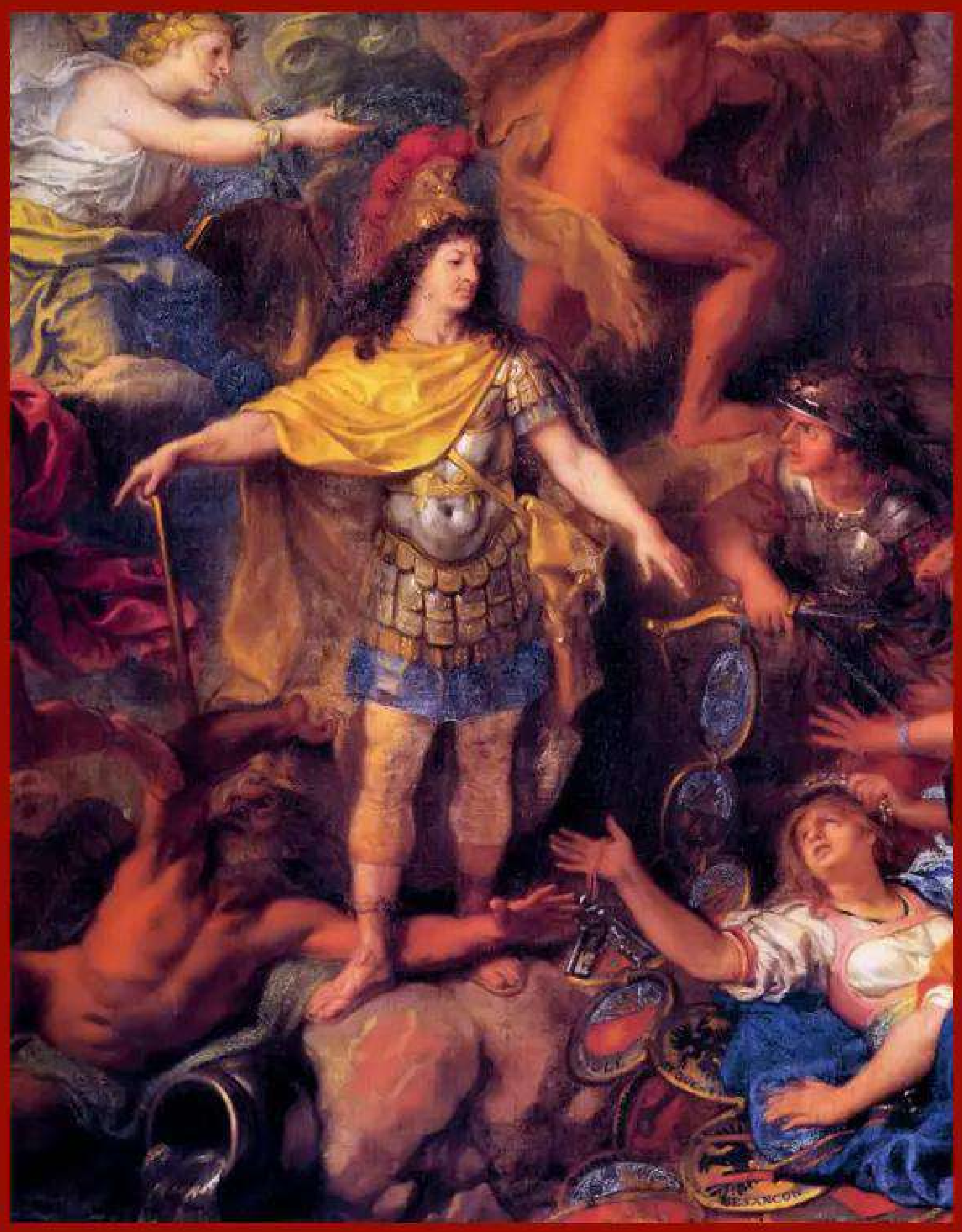
Hyacinthe Rigaud's magnificent portrait of Louis XIV shows the famous Sun King in 1701, and was intended to convey the monarch's prestige and power

Although the royal family eventually returned to Paris, they never felt entirely safe. On one humiliating occasion that Louis would always remember, a mob gained entry to the royal apartments at night and demanded to see their sovereign. They were allowed to reverently file past the royal bed to see the boy king, who swallowed his fury and pretended to be asleep. Unsurprisingly, the royal family packed up and fled the capital again shortly afterwards. More humiliating still was that so many members of the highest aristocracy, including Princes of the Blood, and even members of Louis' own family, sided with the rebels. The Prince de Condé, a celebrated general who was beloved throughout France, initially fought on the side of the crown until he was persuaded to swap sides and lead troops against the royal forces instead, which led to Queen Anne ordering his arrest. Even worse, Louis' own uncle Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, an inveterate troublemaker, sided with the rebellious nobles while his daughter Anne-Marie-Louise, Duchesse de Montpensier, who was determined to marry her cousin Louis as soon as he was old enough, was exiled from court because of her active participation in the rebellion, which famously included ordering that the Bastille cannons be fired on royal forces. Although he was still a child, and to an extent shielded from the decision-making, military manoeuvring and political ramifications of the Fronde rebellion, he understood enough to form his own opinions about who was responsible for the outrages against his royal authority and determine a plan to ensure that it would never happen again.


Even in his childhood, Louis' image was curated to reference ancient gods and mythology

Louis officially reached his age of majority two days after his 13th birthday in September 1651 and had his coronation three years later, yet he was still under the control of the unpopular Queen Anne and Cardinal Mazarin, who oversaw the governance of the realm. Energetic, bold and ambitious, Louis chafed under the restrictions that they imposed upon him, longing for a time when he would rule France alone. Although outwardly confident, the events of his childhood had left him feeling insecure, powerless and deeply wary of the aristocracy and his own extended family, whom he was now unable to trust. As a handsome and charming young king presiding over a magnificent court, Louis appeared to outsiders to be in control, but in reality, everyone close to him knew that the real power remained with his mother and Cardinal Mazarin, who further hampered his freedom by keeping a close eye on the royal coffers. Louis must have wondered when this would finally end, until the hated Mazarin died in March 1661, and all of the power and royal revenue began to flow unimpeded towards him.


Louis quickly realised that one of the best ways to secure power was to keep his nobility as close as possible



PUBLIC IMAGE

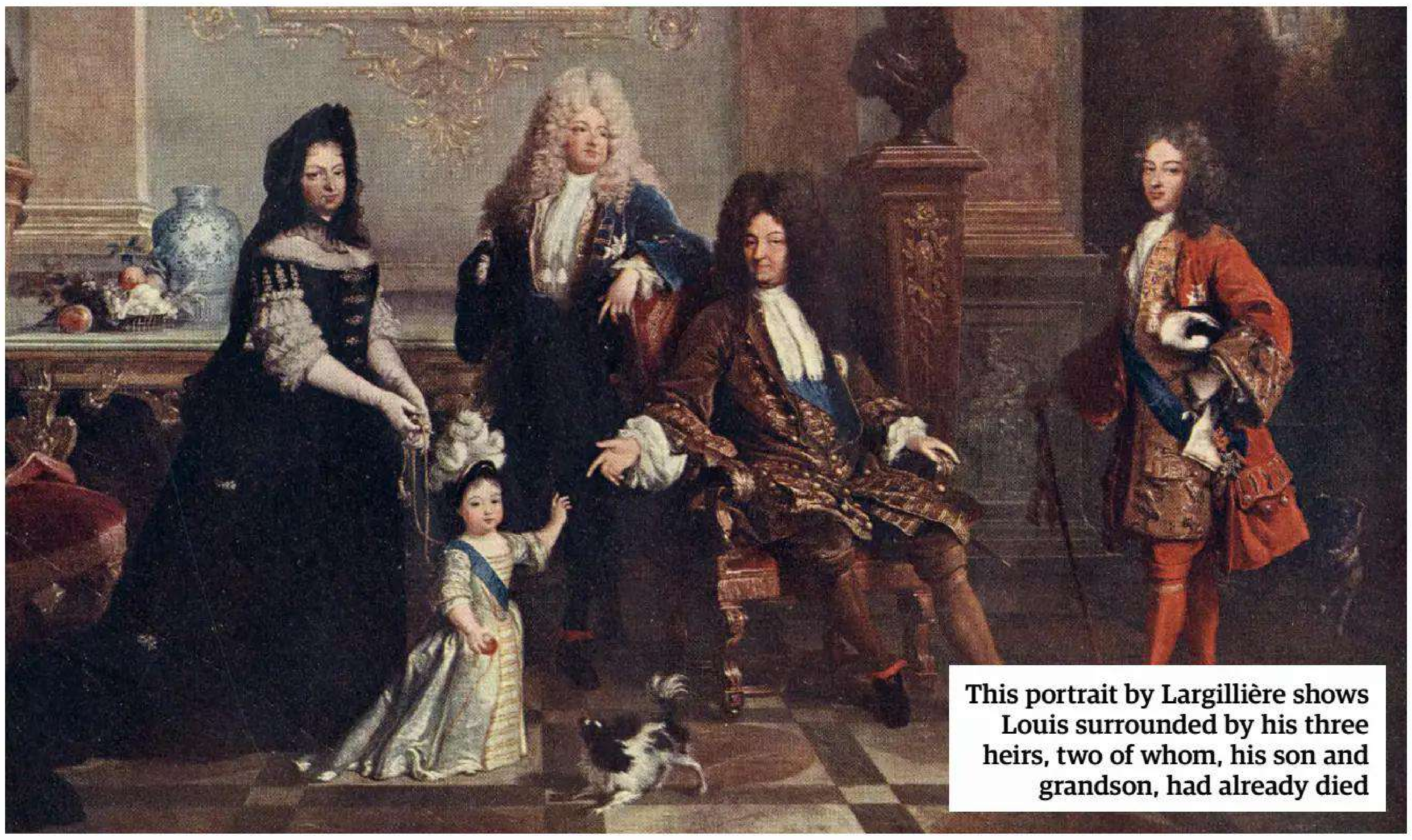
Louis XIV carefully curated his image to ensure that his people both respected and feared him

France had been in varying degrees of turmoil for well over a century before Louis XIV's accession and he was determined to unify the nation with himself as figurehead, bringing much needed order to the realm. To accomplish this, it was not enough that he should be a mere man, albeit one who wore a crown – he would need to be something more, something godlike in both outward splendour and omnipotence.

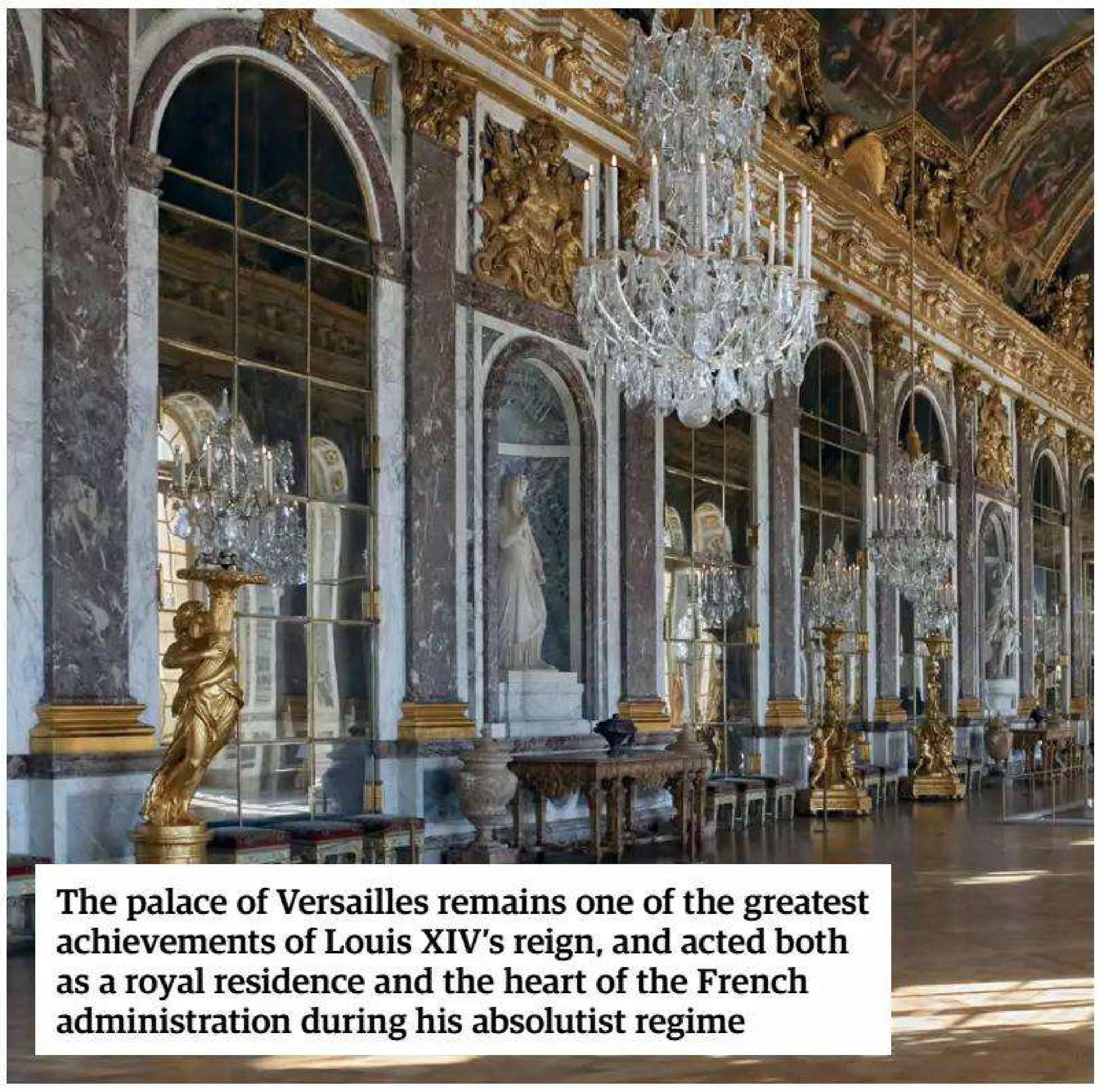
At ground level, Louis loved to be seen as approachable, and was punctiliously polite and kind to everyone he met, regardless of their social class, but the image that he wished to project from a distance was very different, and specifically designed to underline the gap between himself and his people. Other leaders might have cultivated a more paternal image, portraying themselves as the affectionate but firm father of the nation, but Louis, who was fascinated by the Roman emperors, decided to follow a rather different path and instead portray himself as akin to an actual god, more specifically Apollo, the charismatic sun god who also governed truth, light, knowledge and poetry. To this end, Louis ruthlessly engineered his own image and reputation, carefully ensuring that every painting, engraving and sculpture displayed him at his magnificent best, inspiring reverent respect from his subjects and fearful awe from everyone else.

Even in old age, when Louis was corpulent and infirm, no longer the handsome and athletic king that he had been in his youth, he still managed to project an unassailable aura of power and majesty that almost made those around him forget about his infirmities.

Images Getty Images



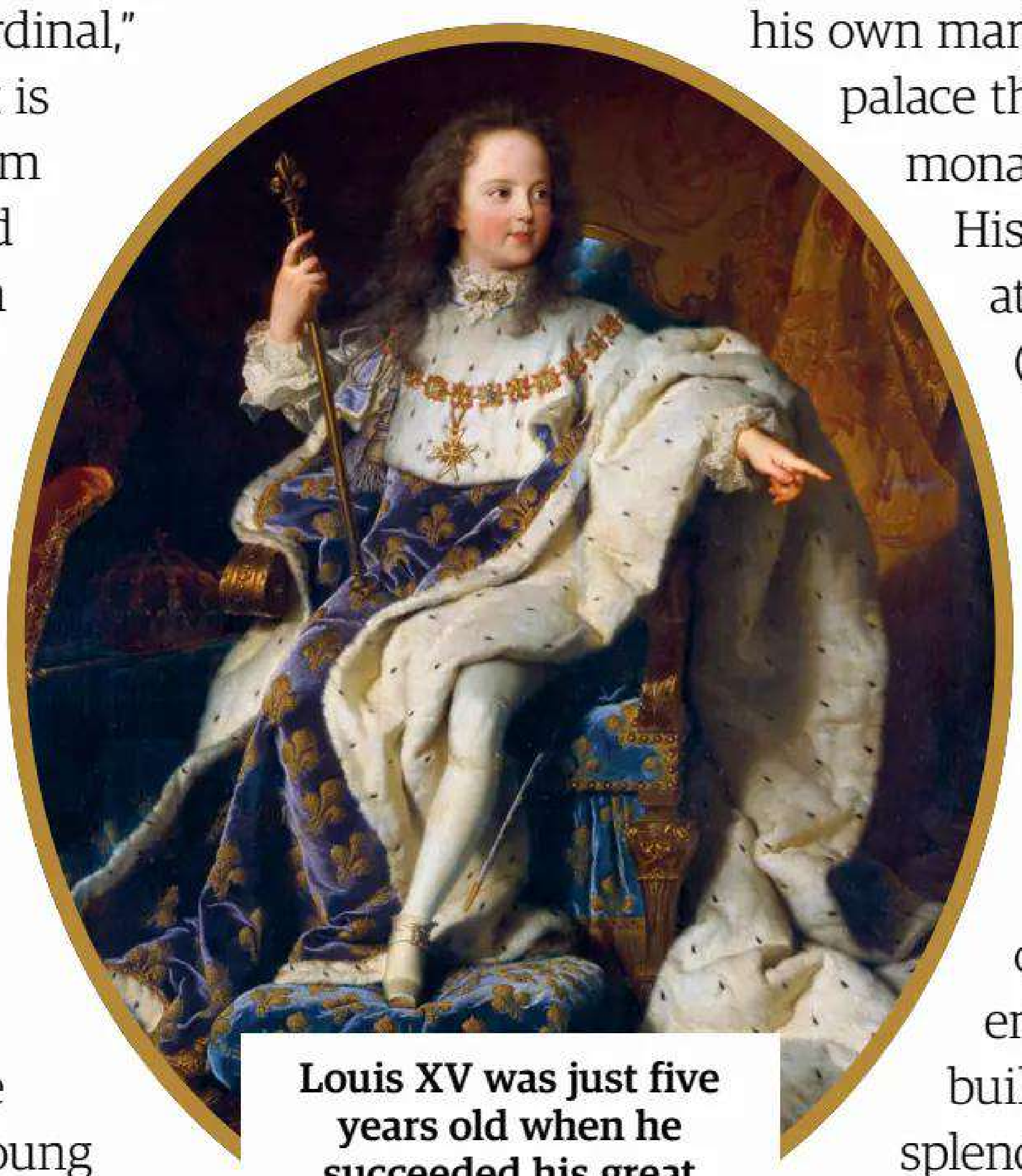
This portrait by Largillière shows Louis surrounded by his three heirs, two of whom, his son and grandson, had already died



The palace of Versailles remains one of the greatest achievements of Louis XIV's reign, and acted both as a royal residence and the heart of the French administration during his absolutist regime

At the time of Mazarin's death, Louis was 22 years old and had been the king for almost 18 years. He had been terrorised, patronised and sidelined - but not anymore. When asked who would replace Mazarin as chief minister, Louis astonished everyone by announcing that there would be no replacement and that instead, he would be ruling alone. "Up to this moment I have been pleased to entrust the government of my affairs to the late Cardinal," he informed his council. "It is now time that I govern them myself." Although he would accept advice and direction from his ministers, every decision would be made by him from now on.

It worked in Louis' favour that his period of absolute personal rule followed hot on the heels of a protracted period of internal turmoil. Mazarin had been widely detested and his replacement by the charismatic and popular young king was greeted with great joy and optimism for the future. From the beginning, Louis proved to be an effective ruler, with a particular genius for selecting the very best advisors and most efficient administrators for his council. The difficult early years of his reign may have left him extremely mistrusting of people, but they had also made him a reasonably good judge of character, who richly rewarded loyalty, but was also capable of acting with decisive ruthlessness towards those unfortunate enough to have disappointed him.



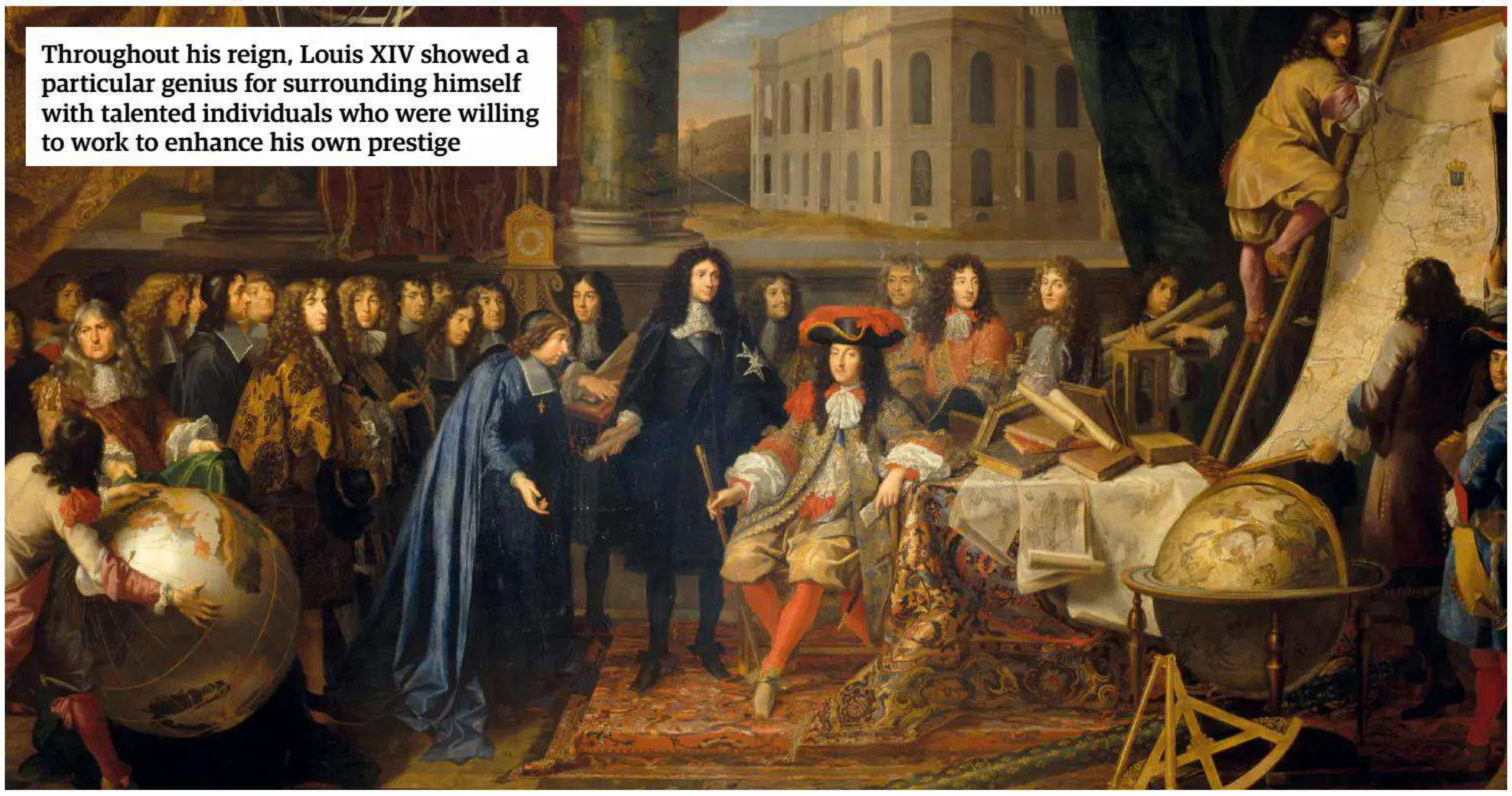
Louis XV was just five years old when he succeeded his great grandfather as monarch

Although initially Louis was preoccupied with stabilising the nation's parlous financial situation and establishing himself as an absolute ruler, he was also keen to leave Paris, which he still associated with the terrifying events of the Fronde rebellion. At first, the court spent a great deal of time at the sprawling palace at Fontainebleau, but he quickly began to look for a more suitable spot where he could make his own mark and create a splendid palace that was truly worthy of the monarch that he intended to be. His father's old hunting lodge at Versailles, 18 kilometres (11 miles) outside the capital, seemed an unlikely choice but Louis, who first visited Versailles in 1651, would not be deterred and from 1661, shortly after Mazarin's death, began an intensive programme of expanding and embellishing the original building, gradually creating a splendid palace for himself.

Although Versailles was calculated to project an aura of majesty and fill visitors, especially those from other countries, with awe and envy, Louis also intended for his new palace to act as the central powerhouse; the beating heart of his absolutist regime. Once installed there and at a safe distance from Paris and the parliament, he worked hard to cement his position as absolute monarch. "L'état, c'est moi," he allegedly declared, and he did not allow anyone to forget that he was in charge. Apparently indefatigable, he worked tirelessly, overseeing every detail of his nation's governance, from taxation to foreign policy, and making it clear to his ministers that he was interested in everything, no matter how trivial or unimportant it might appear.

By the end of the decade, Louis was spending most of his time at Versailles, having decided that he needed to put as much distance as possible between himself and his capital, but he was not able to accomplish a permanent move to the palace until 1682. His distrust of his nobility had not abated since the dark days of the Fronde, and as he did not want to leave them behind in Paris, where they would be free to plot against him, he was forced to come up with a solution to this quandary - he would bring them along with him to Versailles to keep an eye on them. To this end, he ensured that they would all be housed, either in the palace itself (where they would fiercely compete over draughty, uncomfortable rooms) or in the elegant town that was quickly springing up around the palace, where the wealthiest aristocratic families

> *"L'état, c'est moi," he allegedly declared, and he did not allow anyone to forget that he was in charge"*



Throughout his reign, Louis XIV showed a particular genius for surrounding himself with talented individuals who were willing to work to enhance his own prestige

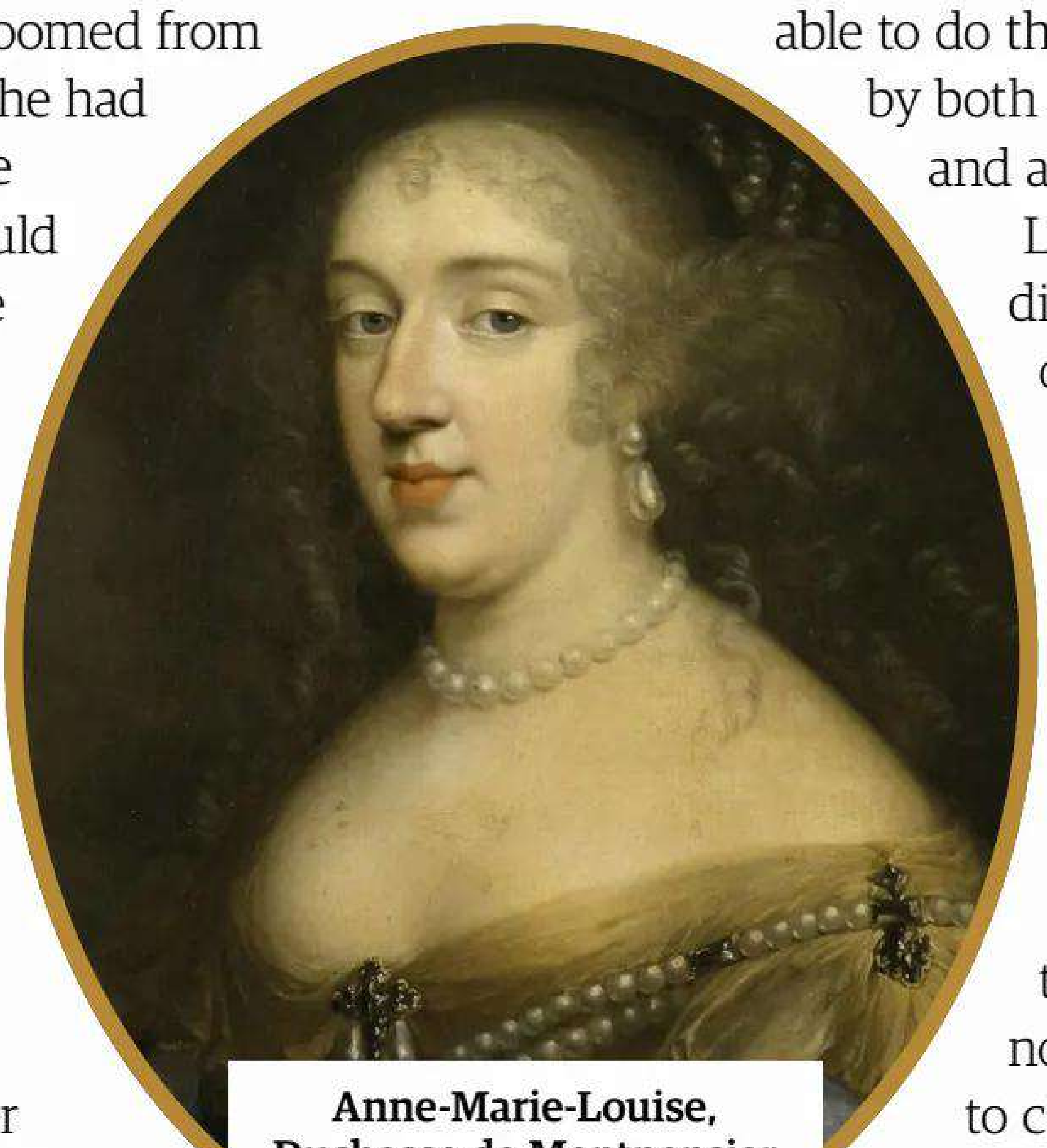
set about building their own mansions to remain close to the court.

Paris was renowned throughout Europe as a glamorous creative hub, where all the latest fashions were set, the greatest minds resided and the most wonderful art was created. Louis had to make sure that his nobles wanted to follow him to Versailles by making the court entertainment even more splendid than any in the capital, and ensuring that the most fashionable goods could be just as easily procured at his palace as on the most stylish streets of Paris. There was a price for all of this splendour, though – Louis kept a close watch on everyone at court, including his own family, employing secret police and having all correspondence opened and read, with the juiciest details being relayed straight back to him – a fact that his family would on occasion use as a means to make him indirectly aware of any complaints that they might have.

He ensured that everyone at court knew that he was the centre of their world while they were all merely satellites, orbiting around him, with the most trivial details of their lives dictated by his daily routine, which they had to witness and participate in. The male courtiers were expected to be in constant attendance, which included participating in his morning 'lever' when the highest ranking aristocrats competed to hand him his clothes, accompany him on his afternoon walk, watch him eat his meals and then jostle to help when he was publicly put to bed at night. By making his courtiers compete for his attention, Louis sought to remove their will to rebel and make them entirely dependent upon him, and to a large extent he succeeded.

When Louis XIV died at the age of 76 in September 1715, his five-year-old great-grandson succeeded him as Louis XV. The Sun King would have been a hard act for anyone to follow, but it was especially so for such a small, shy child as the new king. When Louis XIV created Versailles, he made himself the central focus of one of the most magnificent courts in history, and also placed himself at the head of the administrative structure of the entire nation. He had assumed that the system would continue to revolve in the same way around his successor. His son and grandson had both been groomed from birth to take the reins after he had gone, but no one could have foreseen that both men would predecease him and that he would be succeeded by a child not much older than he had been when he became king.

Sadly, unlike his great- grandfather, Louis XV did not have a mother to act as regent. Instead, he was placed under the care of the Duc d'Orléans, son of Louis XIV's younger brother Philippe, who took charge of both government and court until the young monarch had reached the age of 13. As Louis XIV had deeply disliked the Duc d'Orléans, he attempted to curtail his power by stipulating in his will that until his heir was able to rule alone, France should be governed by a Regency Council made up of 14 members, only for Orléans to overturn this after his death. He secured the support of the Parliament of Paris by restoring the right to challenge the monarch's decisions, along with the authority that had been stripped from them by Louis XIV.



Anne-Marie-Louise, Duchesse de Montpensier ultimately died unmarried and childless

This restoration of parliamentary powers was a thorn in the side of the French monarchy from this point on, and ultimately led to the events of 1789 and the deposition of Louis XVI, who was even less able to control his government than his predecessor, Louis XV. While Louis XIV had used his personal charisma and strong will to maintain control and keep his ministers in line, neither of his successors upon the throne were able to do this, critically hampered by both weakness of character and apathy.

Louis XIV used public display, etiquette and ostentatious ceremonies to emphasise his authority and reinforce his position as the centre of the court. However, to his successors, his style of kingship, which was almost akin to a cult of personality, was a terrible burden, although not one that they felt able to change, preferring instead to circumvent it rather than impose their will.

Louis XIV's success as an absolute monarch had been almost entirely due to his strong and decisive personality, but in creating an expectation that the personal attributes of the monarch were crucial to the prosperity of the regime, he did his successors a huge disservice as neither of them were suited to the task. It was later said that while under Louis XIV nobody dared to breathe, under Louis XV they whispered, and under Louis XVI, they shouted – to ultimately devastating effect.

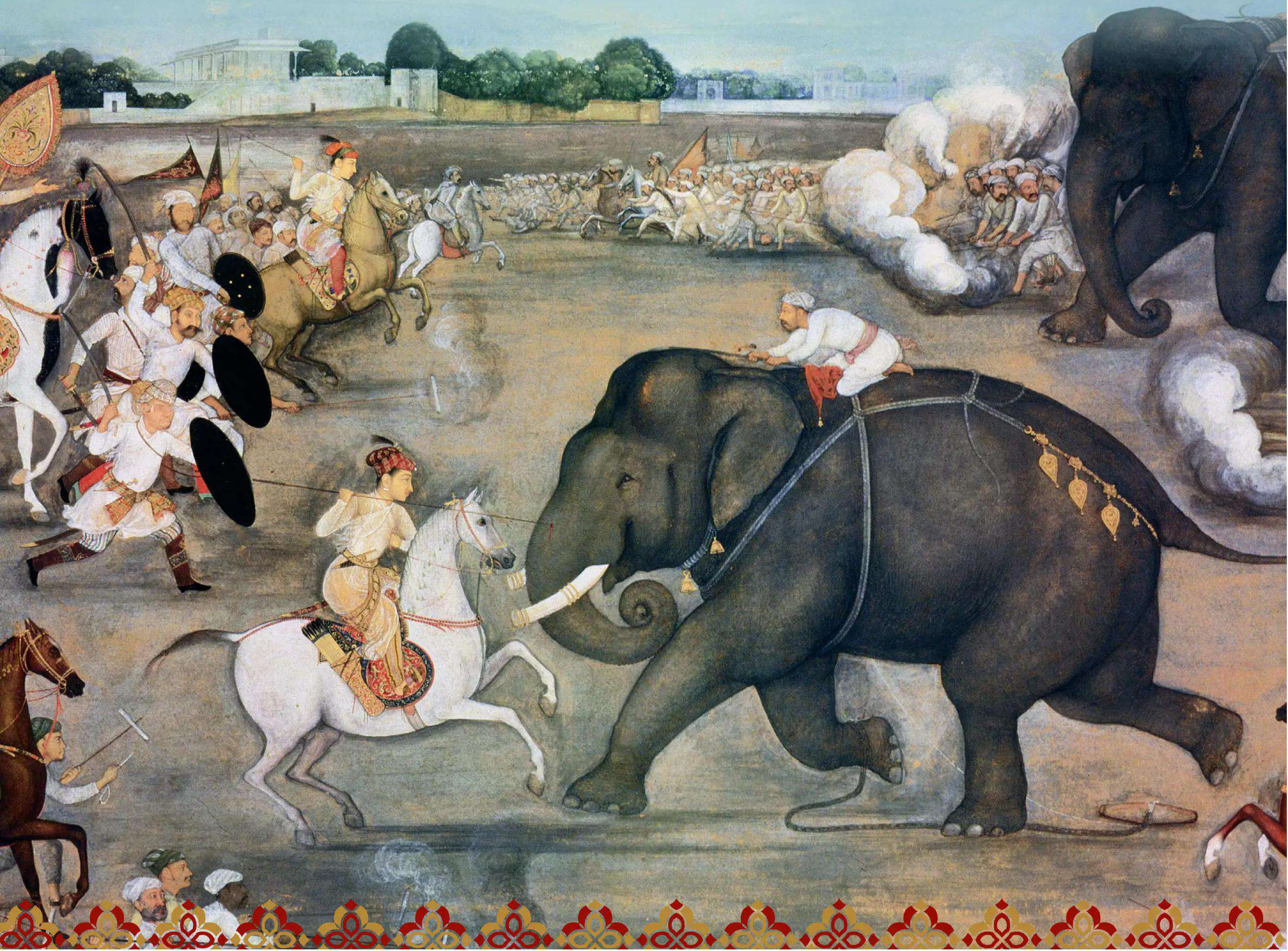
Images Getty Images

AURANGZEB

Conqueror of the World

After decades of prejudicial policies and endless conquest, Aurangzeb took the Mughal Empire to great heights, setting up a spectacular fall

Words **Hareth Al Bustani**

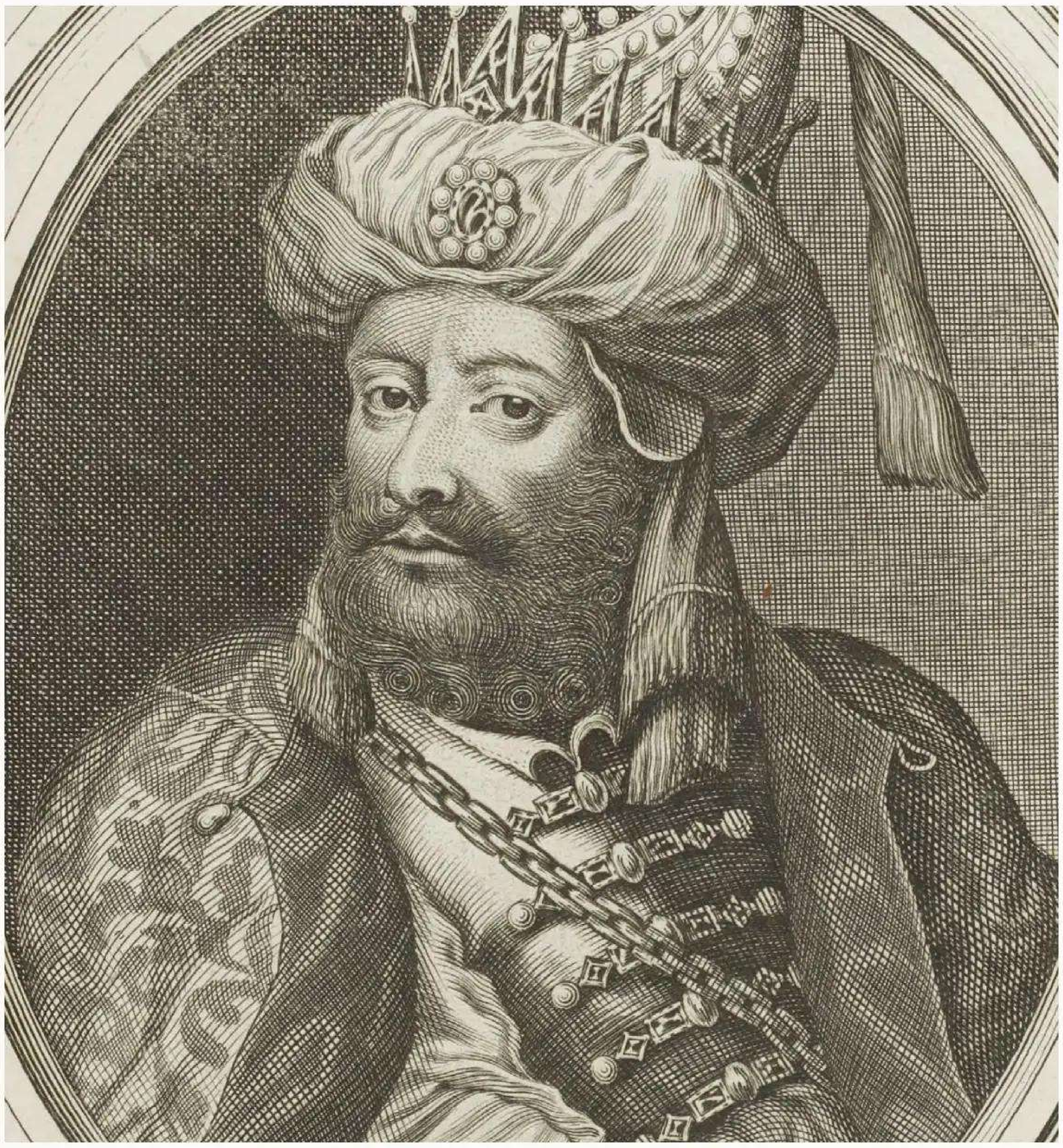


In 1657 the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan p 1657 the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan presided over the world's wealthiest empire, sprawled across Afghanistan in the north and deep into southern India. Under his tenure, the empire reached new heights of wealth, power and prestige, manifested in his magnificent architectural wonders such as the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and the sparkling new, white marble-clad city of Shahjanabad.

However, the emperor was deathly ill, and his four sons knew exactly what that meant. To the Mughals, succession was a bloody form of natural selection. The fact that Shah Jahan had already appointed his eldest son, Dara Shikoh, his heir meant nothing. If you were an emperor's son, as one Persian phrase put it, it was, "either the throne or the grave."

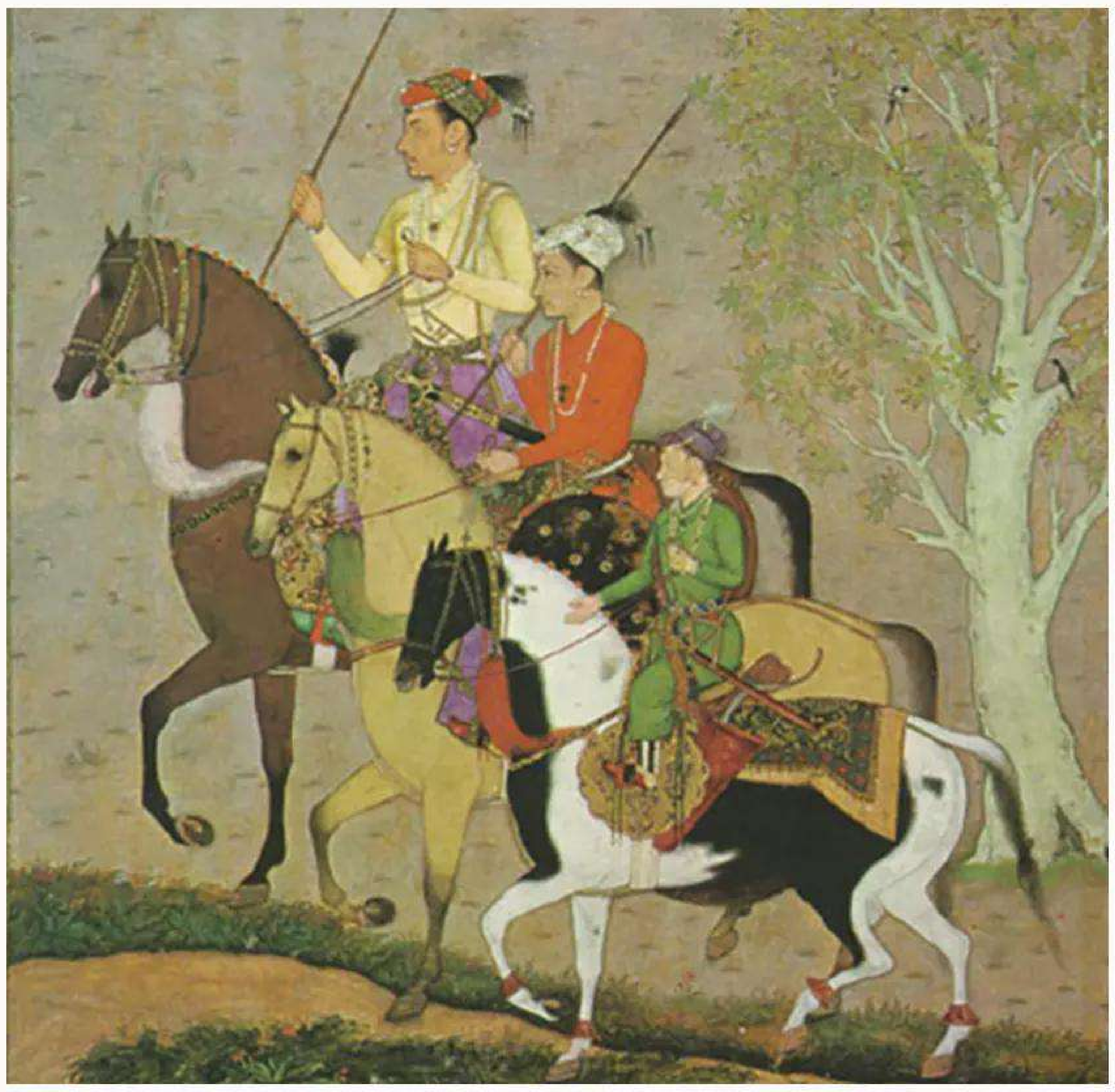
News of Shah Jahan's illness spread like wildfire. Based in the royal court, Dara boasted considerable administrative and martial experience and a huge army, ready to kill and die for his cause. Yet the same could be said of all his brothers, Shuga, the governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; Aurangzeb, governor of the Deccan; and Murad, governor of Gujarat and Malwa.

RIGHT Aurangzeb remains a deeply divisive figure in Indian history to this day



> *"If you were an Emperor's son, as one Persian phrase put it, it was 'either the throne or the grave'"*

BELOW A painting from c.1637 shows the brothers (left to right) Shah Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad Baksh in their younger years



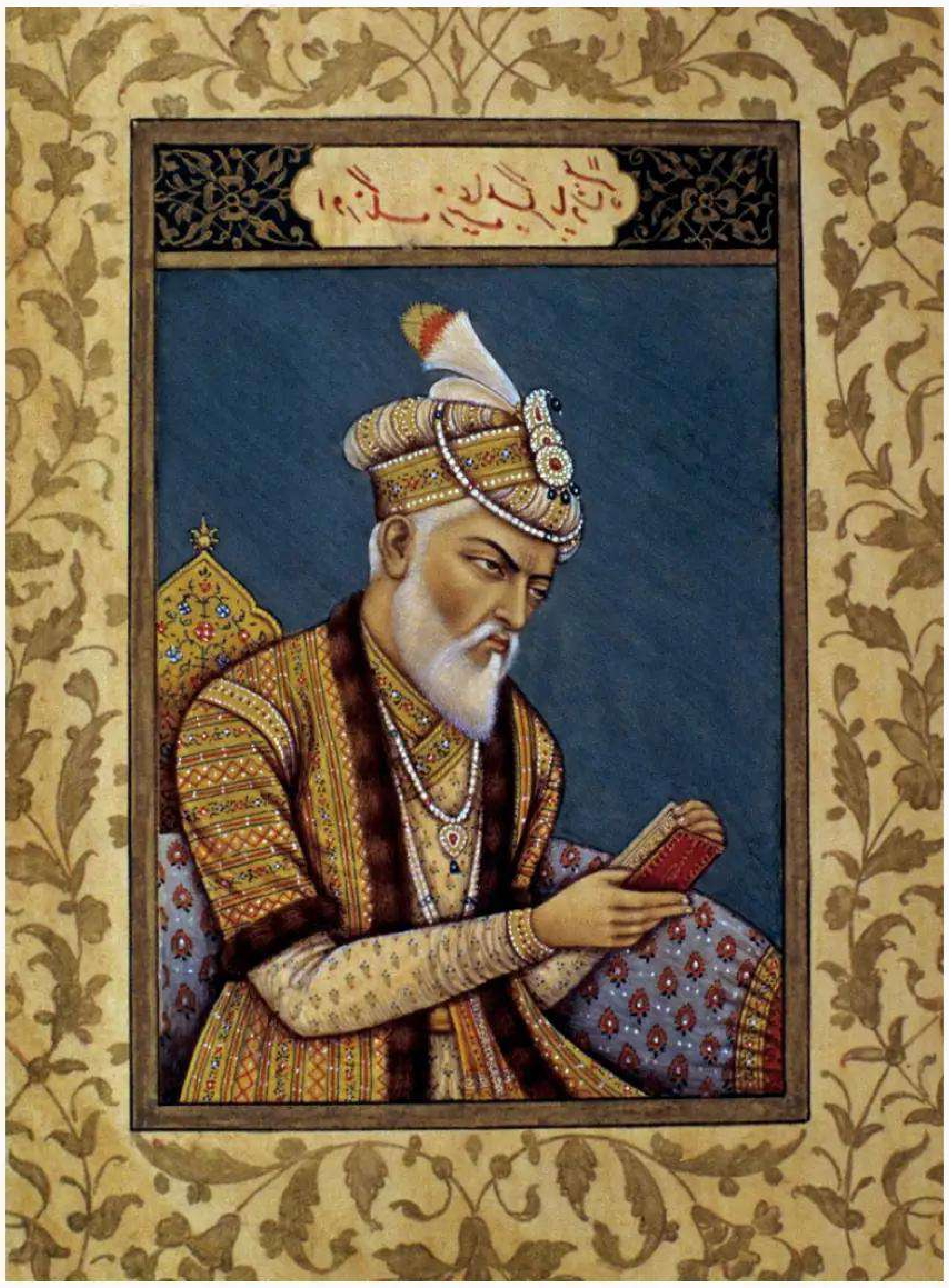
In the ensuing civil war, Aurangzeb proved himself a remarkable general, allying with Murad to drive Dara from the capital of Agra and take it for himself. By now their father had made a miraculous recovery, but it was too late; Aurangzeb had already crossed the Rubicon, or in this case the River Chambal. Unwilling to step back, in an act of unthinkable cruelty he had his own father locked up in Agra's Red Fort, in a room overlooking the Taj Mahal, which Shah Jahan had built as a tomb for his favourite wife. To many, it was an illegitimate act of usurpation most unbecoming of a Muslim leader. To Aurangzeb, it was simply a rite of passage - his birthright.

Having taken the capital Aurangzeb turned on Murad, taking him prisoner, and chased Shuja out of the empire to Burma, where he was later slaughtered by a local leader. Dara regrouped his army, only to be betrayed by one of his allies and delivered to Aurangzeb. Unwilling to leave any pretenders alive, Aurangzeb had both his captive brothers executed; accusing Dara of idolatry and apostasy, and Murad of murder. When their sister tried to intervene on Dara's behalf, Aurangzeb spat back, "Dara is an infidel." Aurangzeb sent Dara's bloody head to his father as a gruesome symbol of his victory; though tens of thousands of men had perished on blood-drenched battlefields, the empire was his now.

Despite his success, for overthrowing his own father Aurangzeb was accused by various Asian Muslim leaders of violating Islamic law and values. One of his generals even stormed into the palace and hurled his sword to the floor, until the emperor won him back over with his characteristically calm charisma. Going forward, he declared that piety would be one of the four pillars of his rule, alongside power, justice and kingship. Though he had certainly projected power, he had some lost piety to make up for.

Just a year after seizing the throne, Aurangzeb began recruiting censors of public morals in every major city, drawn from the religious clergy. For all

Images Alamy (main), Victoria and Albert Museum (brothers), Gallica Digital Library (portrait)



ABOVE The sixth Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb devoted his reign to the pillars of justice, power, piety and Mughal kingship

his ruthlessness, he wanted to prove his piety by rolling out Sharia Islamic Law across the entire empire and placing strict bans on practices forbidden in Islam, such as drinking or gambling in public. He even donated vast fortunes to the Sharif of Mecca, for the upkeep of holy places in the Hejaz.

Going further, he not only devoted seven years of his life to memorising the Holy Qur'an, but transformed the entire court. While the Mughal court had long been defined by opulence and grandeur, Aurangzeb was less interested in such overt displays of wealth. He not only began to tone down his bejewelled attire, but increasingly covered the costs of such luxuries by sewing and selling prayer caps in his spare time. Instead of expressing prestige through colossal architecture, as Akbar and Shah Jahan had, he patronised the production of the comprehensive collection of Islamic legal codes, known as Al-Fatawa Al-'Alamgiriyya.

Though many elites indulged in alcohol, marijuana and opium, some even drinking themselves to death, Aurangzeb abstained from any intoxicants. Although he dressed his prized Uzbek hounds in red velvet, he considered hunting a waste of time and kicked the musicians out of his court. On one occasion, a eunuch accidentally knocked the emperor over and immediately fell to his knees in terror. The emperor calmly said, "Wherefore fearest thou a created being, one like thyself… rise and be not afraid." Yet, for all his supposed modesty, he never visited his father, nor did he attend his funeral when he finally perished in 1666.

His emphasis on Muslim piety also had a somewhat jarring effect on much of the empire's 100 million residents, who

> *"In an act of unthinkable cruelty, he had his own father locked up in Agra's Red Fort in a room overlooking the Taj Mahal"*

Meet the Mughals

Descended from Timur and Genghis Khan, the Mughals created one of the world's wealthiest and most powerful empires

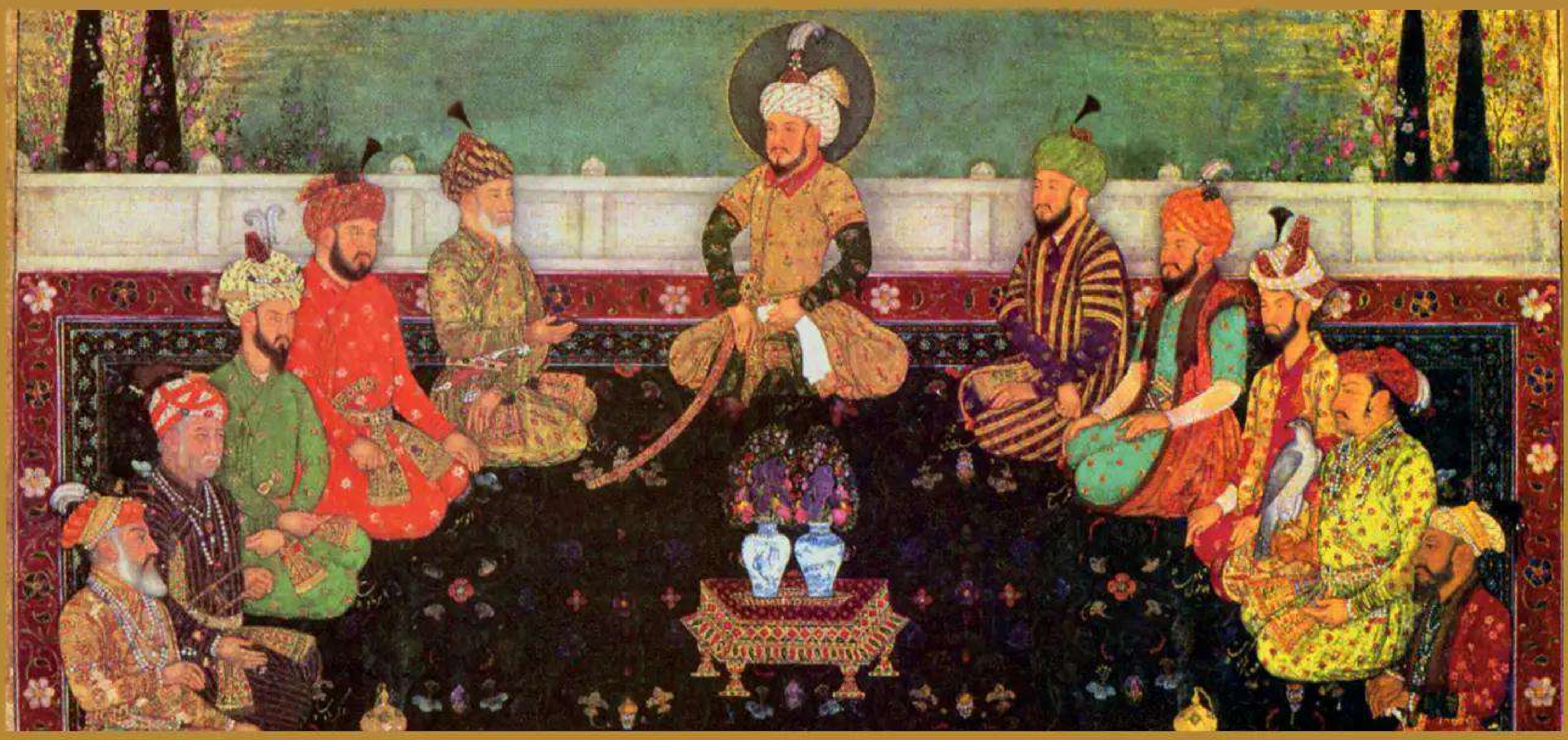
In 1494, the 12-year-old Babur was appointed the leader of Ferghana, in Turkestan. When he was deposed by elder relatives, Babur fled south, capturing Kabul in 1504. From there, he invaded the Indian subcontinent, defeating the Sultan of Delhi's much larger army at the Battle of Panipat in 1526, before conquering Delhi and Agra.

Descended from Genghis Khan on his maternal side, and Timur on his paternal side, Babur's descendants would later be termed the 'Mughals', an Arabic and Persian corruption of 'Mongol'. Although his son Humayun was a less capable ruler, his grandson, Akbar, who rose to the throne at just 13 years old, presided over a remarkable half-century of prosperity.

Backed by heavy artillery, Akbar smashed his way south of the Narmada River into the Deccan Plateau, dramatically expanding the empire with the conquests of Bengal, Gujarat and the Rajput kingdoms. Ruling over an enormous, and diverse, population, he pursued secular policies, abolishing discriminatory taxes and incorporating Hindus into the aristocracy. Akbar also incorporated local dynasties into the empire by granting them official posts, in return for recognition of his supremacy.

Reasonable tax policies helped expand the taxpayer base, making the empire fabulously wealthy, while patronage of the arts and culture created a blossoming Indo-Persian tradition. Under his successor Jahangir, the empire grew increasingly stable before reaching a pinnacle under the great builder Shah Jahan, who projected Mughal wealth, prestige and power with magnificent architectural wonders like the Taj Mahal.

After Aurangzeb died, the British East India Company gradually seized control of the subcontinent, reducing the Mughals to figureheads. The dynasty finally collapsed when Babur Shah II's failed uprising in 1857 resulted in his exile for sedition and treason.



were overwhelmingly non-Muslim. The land the Mughals ruled was a diverse tapestry of cultures, religions, languages and social systems. Although the empire had unified systems of administration, coinage and an official language, there was no notion of shared citizenship. The only true semblance of shared culture was among the elites - the Persianised Muslim aristocracy, and the Brahmins, who sat atop the Hindu caste system. Even on a regional level, those who shared a language or religious group might not have shared a sense of identity.

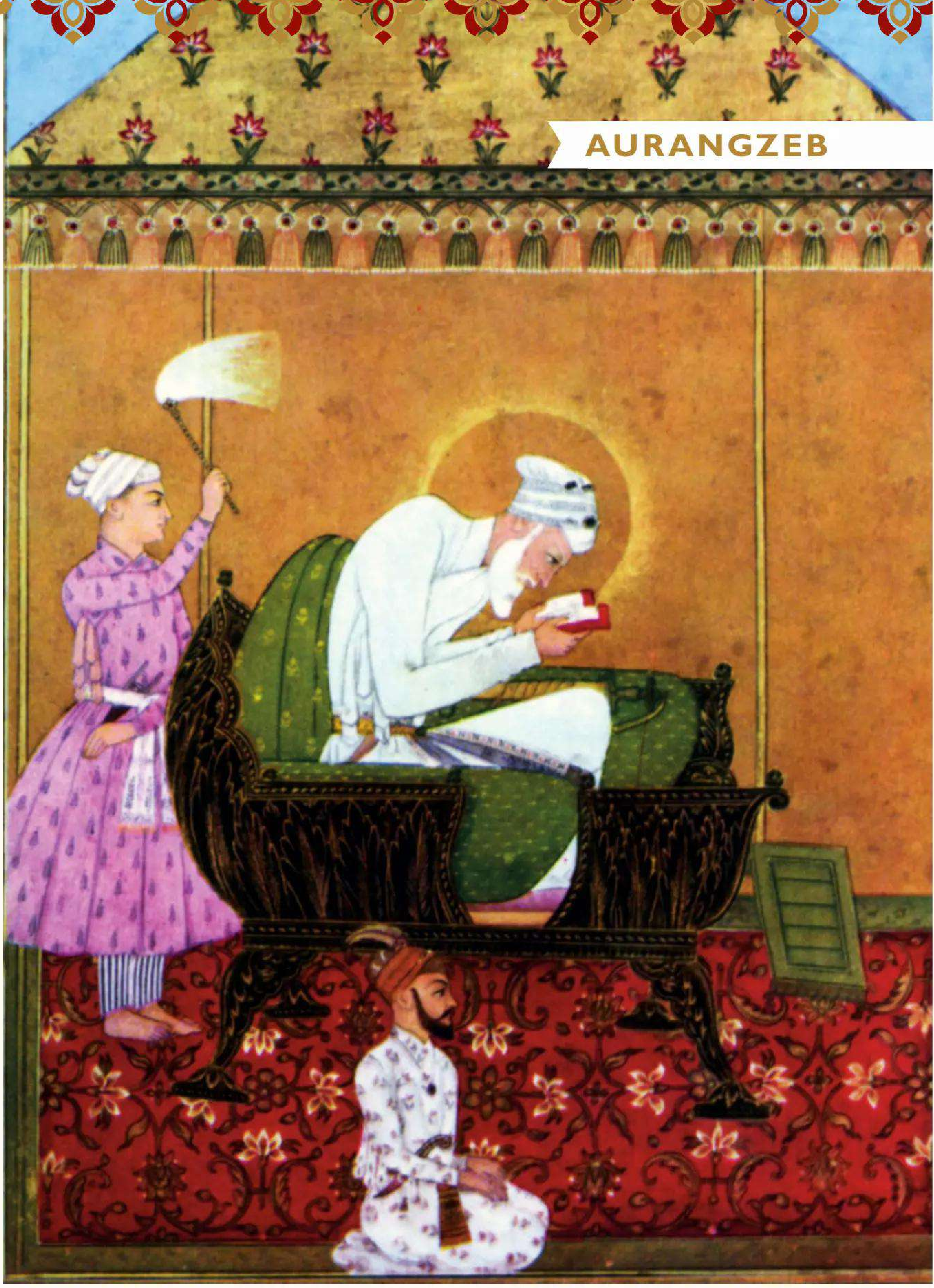
Yet while his predecessors had tried to unify this melting pot beneath secular governance, Aurangzeb was increasingly determined to enforce Islamic law on the entire empire. One of the first ways in which this policy began to bite was with a doubling of the 2.5 per cent duty that Hindu traders paid on goods. Things really escalated, however, in 1668, when Aurangzeb went against the advice of his nobles and theologians and reimposed the jizya poll tax on non-Muslims - 115 years after Akbar had abolished it. A year later he discontinued another long-standing policy: the act of darshan. This was a daily ritual stemming from ancient Hindu custom whereby every morning after prayer, as the sun rose, the emperor stood in an ornate bay window on the eastern palace wall and presented himself to the public. Aurangzeb considered it a form of idol worship and wanted no part of it.

He also denounced large public festivals as distasteful and, more importantly, dangerous to public order. The emperor not only attempted to curb the Diwali, Holi and Muharram celebrations, but the Muslim Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha festivals too. Although he maintained ties with the Sufi mystic community, he banned several controversial writings, such as those of the Muslim polemicist Ahmad Sirhindi.

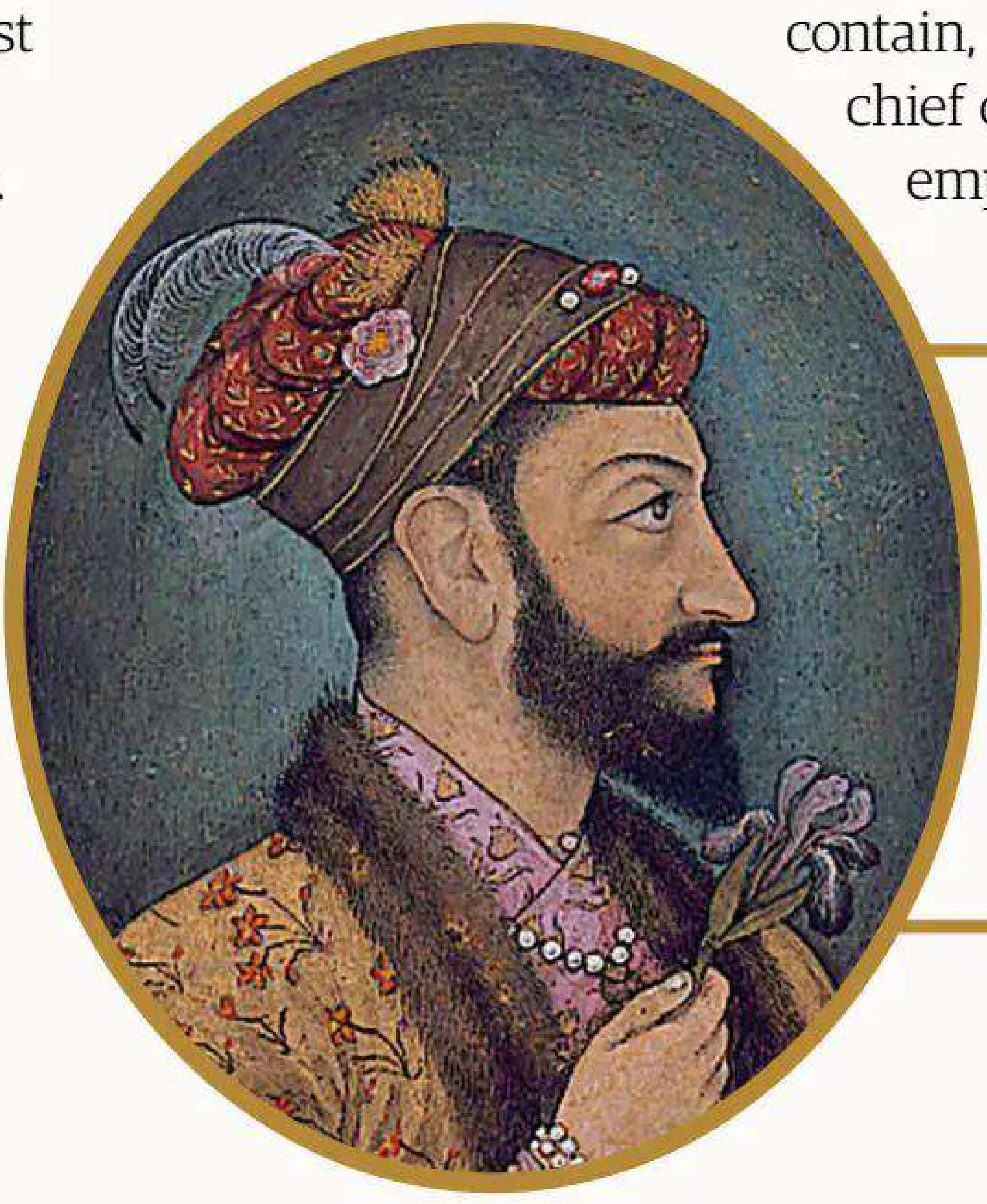
In Punjab, the Sikh leader Guru Tegh Bahadur began to speak out against the emperor's destruction of the secular tradition, leading to unrest. Aurangzeb had Tegh Bahadur arrested and, when he refused to convert to Islam, had him summarily executed. Once again, the emperor displayed an uncanny hypocrisy - for all his calculated cruelty, he could be incredibly patient with ordinary people. He grew quite accustomed to abuse, with Sikhs throwing bricks at him, and poets hurling barbs - although he did try to bribe the latter into stopping. On one occasion, when he was on the way to the Jama Mosque for Friday prayer, a Sufi mystic lobbed a piece of faeces at him, and was remarkably allowed to go free.

However, the emperor could not contain, nor tolerate, the fury of Shivaji, chief of the Maratha, who used the emperor's religious overreach as a rallying cry to carve out an independent Hindu kingdom in the Deccan Plateau. Back when Aurangzeb and his brothers were still feuding, Shivaji seized on the chaos to amass a network of powerful allies, and an army of peasant pastoralists, riding atop light, fast horses. He rapidly carved out a realm of 130,000 square kilometres (50,000 square miles), spanning four per cent of the entire subcontinent, with a revenue one-fifth

RIGHT While Aurangzeb's reversal of Akbar's secular policies enraged many, others praised his commitment to memorising the Qur'an, living modestly, and covering his costs by hand-crafting and selling prayer caps

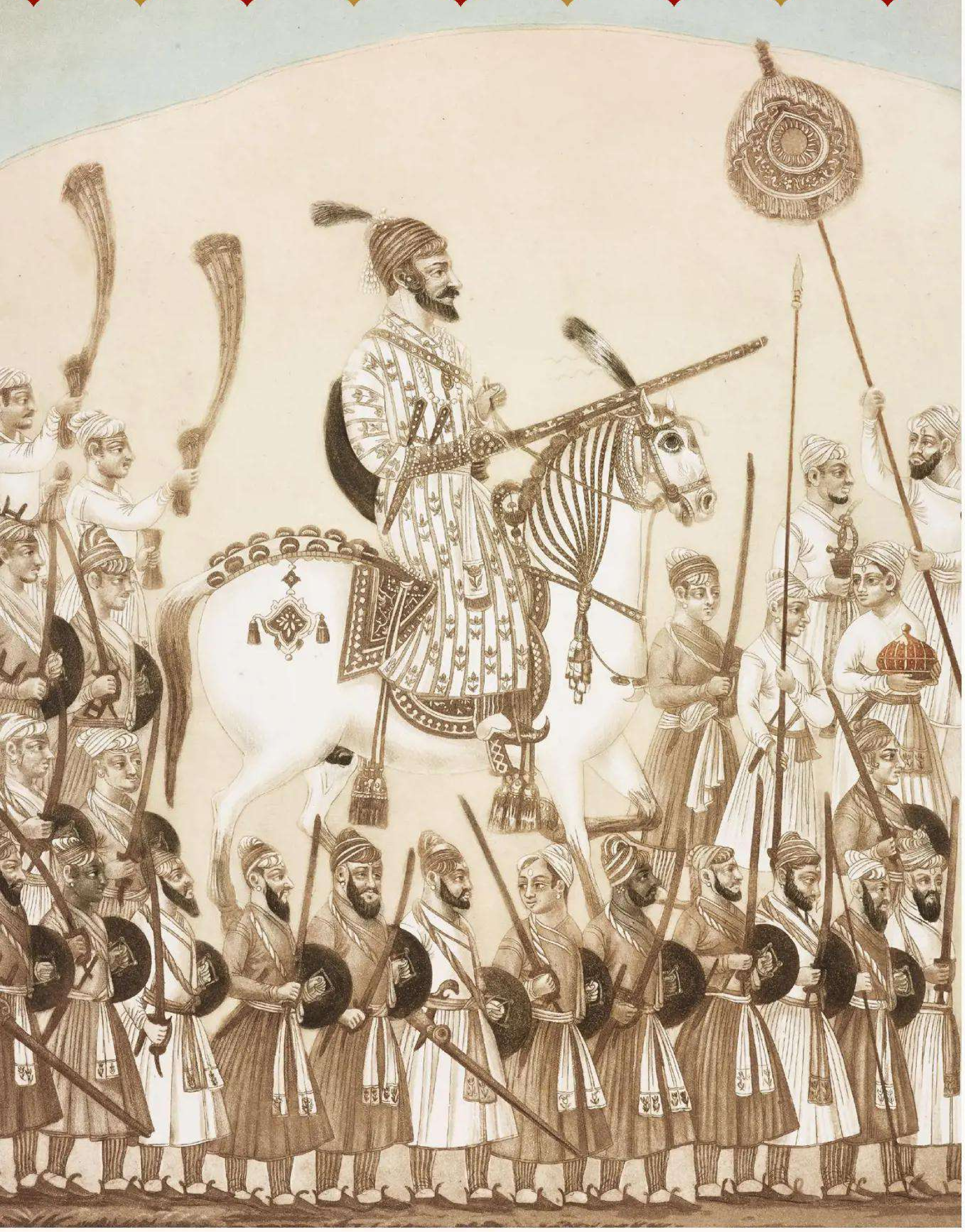


BELOW Flower imagery and interest in horticulture were incredibly popular in the Mughal Empire

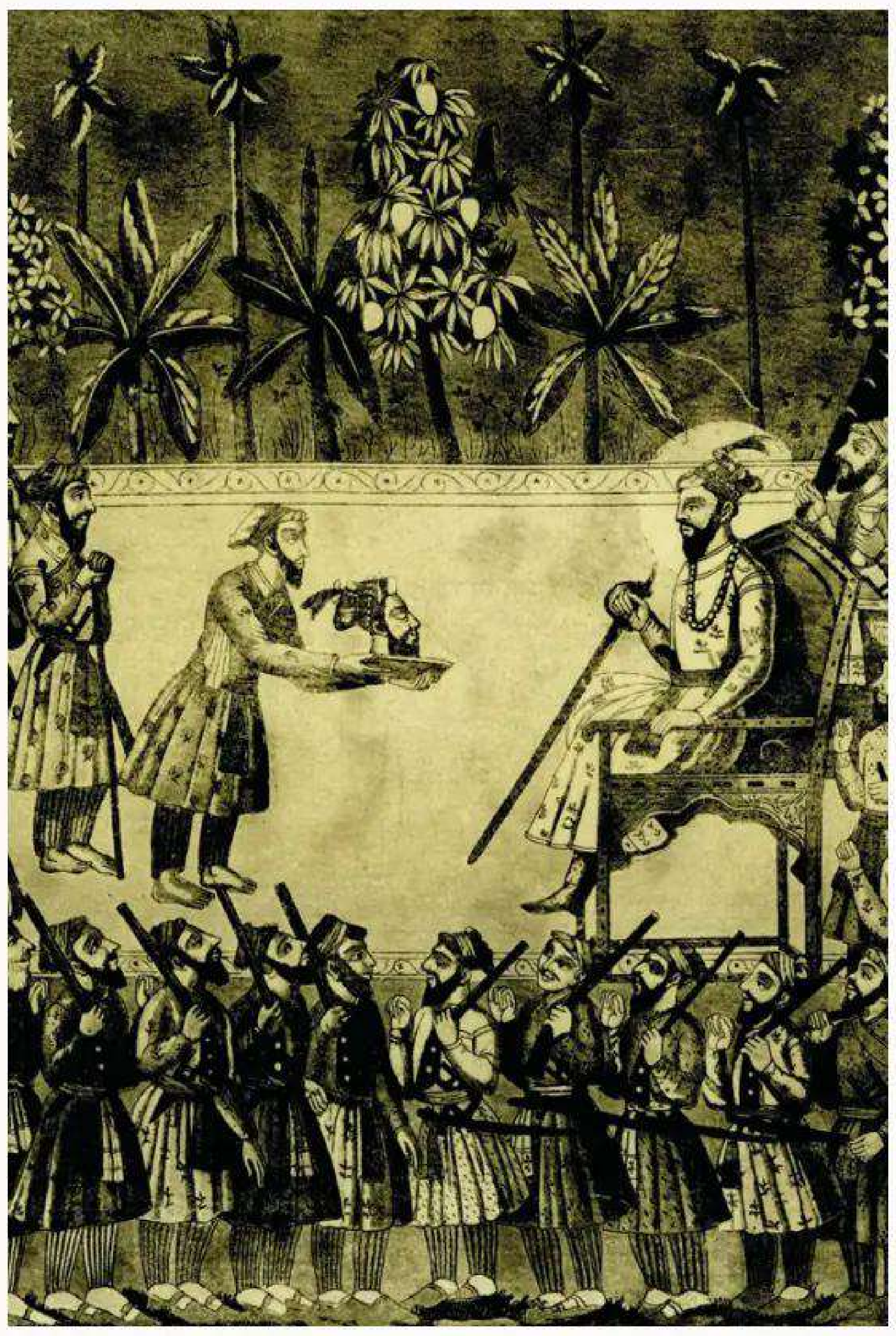


> *"For all his ruthlessness, he wanted to prove his piety by rolling out Sharia Islamic law across the entire empire"*

Images Alamy, Getty Images, The San Diego Museum of Art (horticulture)



LEFT Aurangzeb's greatest foe was Shivaji, the Maratha ruler who dealt the Mughals three devastating humiliations, evading defeat until death and shattering the myth of Mughal invincibility



RIGHT When Emperor Shah Jahan fell ill, his four sons immediately rushed into civil war, with the ruthless Aurangzeb emerging victorious

> *"Aurangzeb sent Dara's bloody head to his father as a grusome symbol of his victory"*

the size of Aurangzeb's. Surrounded by mountains and hillforts, he occupied one of India's best naturally fortified regions.

Immediately after defeating his brothers, Aurangzeb sent his Deccan viceroy to nip the emergent Shivaji in the bud. However, after nearly three years of stagnation, the Mughals suffered a devastating loss, with the viceroy losing a son, thumb and many men. Then, in 1664, Shivaji sacked the fabulously wealthy port of Surat, stealing 10 million rupees and sending shockwaves through the Mughal Empire. The 20,000 defenders had simply fled in the face of Shivaji's 10,000 men. More than just a material loss, Surat was the gateway to the Red Sea and the main port where Muslims departed for the Hajj pilgrimage. Shivaji added insult to injury with a series of regular raids on pilgrim ships.

In 1665, Aurangzeb sent in his top general with a massive army and full diplomatic powers. Shivaji was finally defeated and forced into a peace treaty, handing over most of his strongholds and 80 per cent of his fort revenues. The Mughals were overjoyed at the victory. However, Aurangzeb was in a tight spot. Although he wanted to formally induct Shivaji into his empire, as Akbar had with the Rajputs, he knew there was no position he could possibly offer the 'mountain rat' that would be accepted by both the proud Shivaji and his own fussy nobles, who considered the man a barbarian.

Eventually, those around the emperor convinced him to simply imprison Shivaji, the man who had plundered the Gateway to the Hajj. Yet, to everyone's horror, the elusive Maratha ruler escaped just months later, dealing Aurangzeb's reputation a brutal third humiliation, and shattering the facade of Mughal invincibility. He had no choice but to mobilise a massive force south.

In the ensuing decade, Shivaji locked the Mughals up in what the French traveller François Bernier described as "never-ceasing enterprises". Successive generals were sent, only to fail again and again. Even the Persian shah chastised the emperor, "You call yourself a Padishah (Emperor) but cannot subdue a mere zamindar (rural magnate) like Shiva. I am going to India with an army to teach you your business." The wily Shivaji's premature death in 1680 was met by the court with a bitter obituary: "The infidel went to Hell." Aurangzeb finally heaved a long-overdue sigh of relief, only to be interrupted by the uprising of the Rajputs of Jodhpur and Mewar, who, having seen the Mughals were not indestructible after all, declared independence from the empire.

ABOVE A dagger that belonged to Aurangzeb

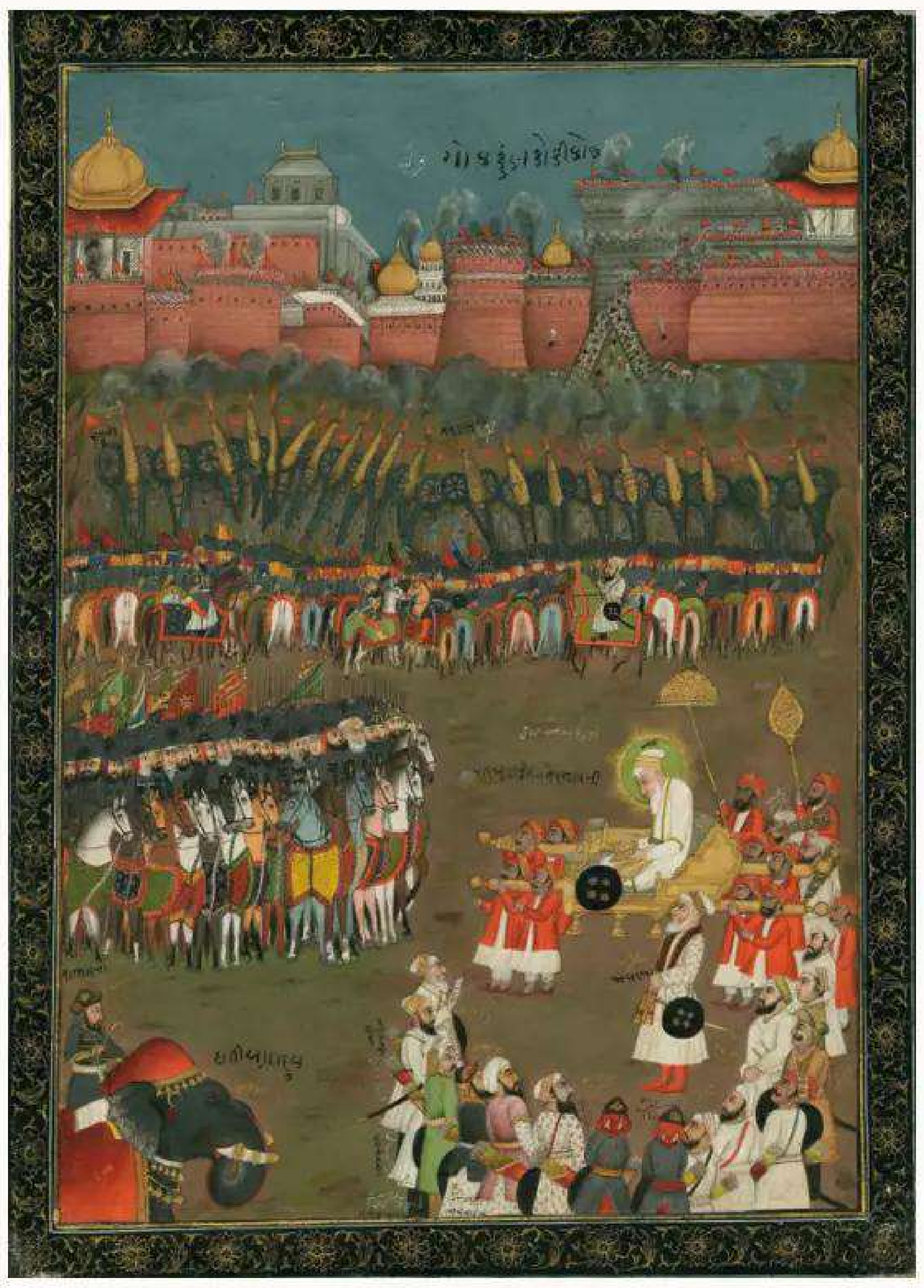
> *"Even when, in his 80s, he was too old to walk, he was carried from battlefield to battlefield upon a stunning palanquin, covered in brocade and deep fringes of silk and gold"*

The next year, 23 years into his rule, the 63-year-old emperor embarked on what would become an eternal series of conquests. He spent the next 26 years waging constant warfare, seizing new domains and besieging forts, until almost the entire Indian subcontinent was thrust beneath the Mughal yoke. His early victories over Bijapur and Golconda further fuelled his martial vigour. During the campaign, the emperor sent his son Akbar to head a great army, only for the wretch to declare himself emperor, and ally with Shivaji's son, Sambhaji. Aurangzeb led the assault on his own son personally, driving him into exile in Persia. When he captured Sambhaji in 1689, having never had the opportunity to unleash his rage against his father, he had him brutally tortured and torn to pieces by metal claws. However, as time went on, the victories slowed down.

Aurangzeb spent the last few decades of his life in military tents, fighting to take central and southern India. Even when, in his 80s, he was too old to walk, he was carried from battlefield to battlefield upon a stunning palanquin covered in brocade and deep fringes of silk and gold - forgetting all else but his thirst for conquest. At either end of the litter were pairs of strongmen, and ahead walked a series of footmen, sprinkling water on the ground to keep the dust down.

By the time he was done, the empire spanned some 4.5 million square kilometres (1.7 million square miles). However, maintaining an army of 500,000 with 50,000 camels and 30,000 war elephants was not cheap. Every time it moved, bands of Maratha guerrillas attacked the stragglers to the rear, making off with what plunder they could. The financial burden of Aurangzeb's conquests largely fell upon the peasantry, who after decades of heavy taxation were squeezed beyond breaking point. Rebellions began to pop up all over the country until new revolts were rising quicker than they could be suppressed. With Aurangzeb tied down in the Deccan wars, he was simply unable to keep track of all the rebellions rising in the farthest flung reaches of his enormous empire. Akbar's network of political alliances, the very foundation of the empire, was beginning to unravel.

In 1707, while camping in central Maharashtra, the emperor developed a severe fever. On 3 March, during his Friday prayers, after 49 years in power, he slid into death. Although he added four new provinces, amounting to a quarter of the empire, he had long worried about its future, declaring, "After me, chaos." After his death, his sons immediately began fighting for control, but the victor Bahadur Shah was unable to control the unwieldy empire. Over the ensuing century, the empire steadily dissolved, before finally being conquered by the British East India Company. Many would later blame Aurangzeb for not only picking at the social fabric of his empire, but expanding it too far too soon.



ABOVE The second half of Aurangzeb's reign was marked by endless conquests, even against fellow Muslims

Aurangzeb: Temple destroyer?

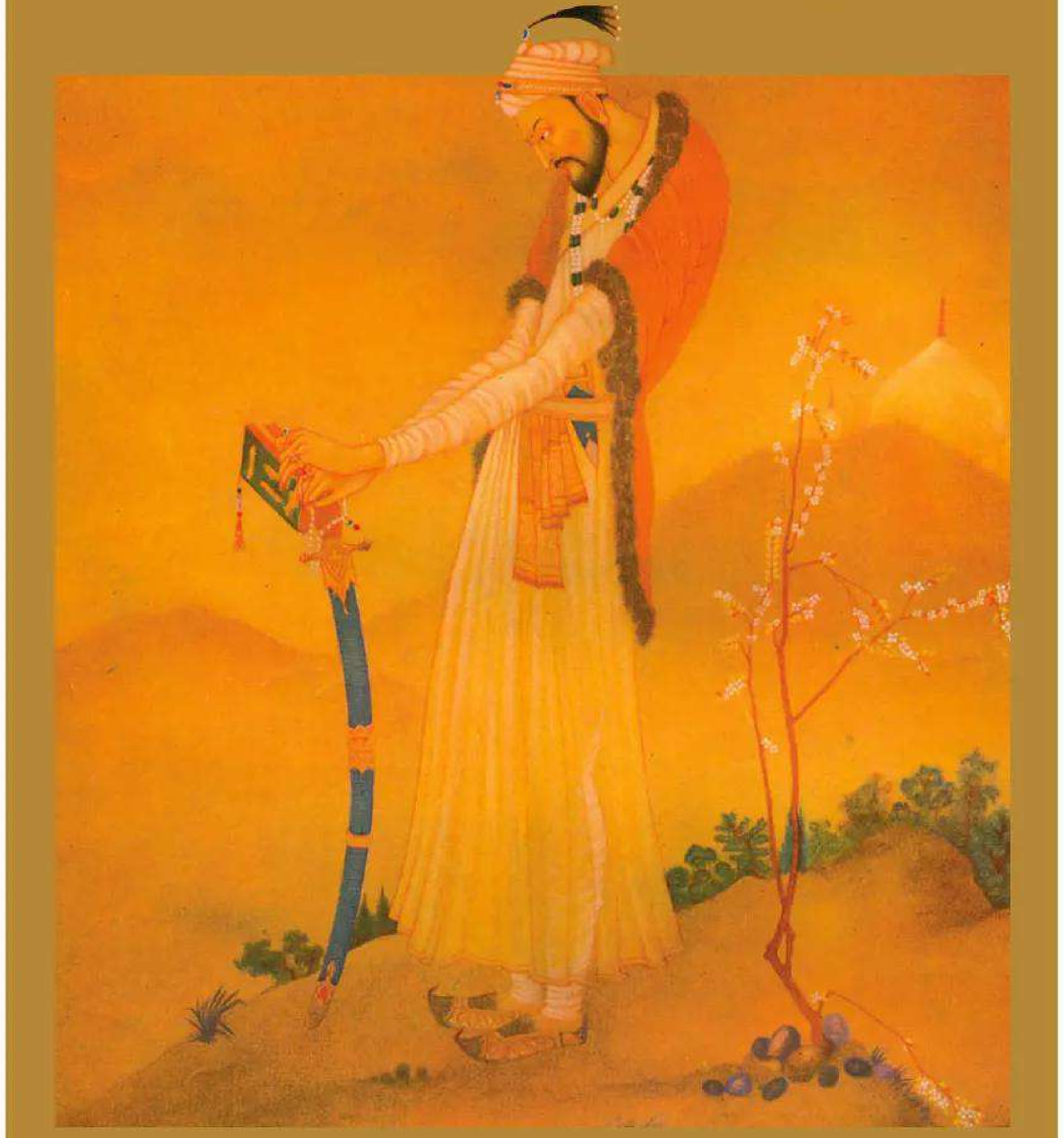
Although Aurangzeb's religious policies were prejudicial, they were tempered by a commitment to the law

Aurangzeb has been demonised as a bigoted, anti-Hindu temple destroyer, remembered in the same breath as the prolific demolisher Mahmud of Ghazni. A member of India's Hindu nationalist BJP party in Rajasthan recently called for National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks to remove materials "glorifying" Aurangzeb. One activist even lodged a legal notice against NCERT, for claiming that after destroying temples Aurangzeb often gave them grants to rebuild.

However, this is a form of historic revisionism, more suited to stoking anti-Muslim sentiments among modern Hindu nationalists than accurately depicting Aurangzeb's policies. Although he may have torn down dozens of temples, there is no evidence he did so indiscriminately. On the contrary, the vast majority of the thousands of Hindu temples were left standing. When the Mathura's Keshava Rai temple was destroyed, for example, it may have been a specific punitive political response to the local Jat rebellion, rather than a general policy.

Although he ordered a recall of endowed lands from Hindus, this was very inconsistent. The emperor continued to grant land to Hindu temples associations and some areas, such as Bengal, saw grants accelerate. He also issued orders protecting Hindu and Jain temples, and did not allow officers to illegally persecute non-Muslims. Moreover, during the course of his reign, he increased the proportion of Hindu nobles by 50 per cent.

Aurangzeb was also unafraid to wage war on Shia Muslims where necessary, as he did with the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda. When these relentless sieges led to famine, Bijapuri theologians begged him to relent, claiming it was forbidden to fight fellow Muslims, but he persisted until they fell.



Images Alamy, Getty Images, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (dagger)

Russia, 1682-1725

PETER THE GREAT

The moderniser who created a Russian empire from the Baltic to the Black Sea

Words **Scott Reeves**

Peter shared the Russian throne with his half-brother Ivan from the age of ten, but he was little bothered by royal responsibilities – young Peter happily enjoyed childhood pursuits on his vast estates instead. At 16, Peter discovered an old British sailing boat in the palace gardens and restored it, using his new vessel to learn how to sail. It provoked a lifelong love of all things maritime that would go on to influence his long reign.

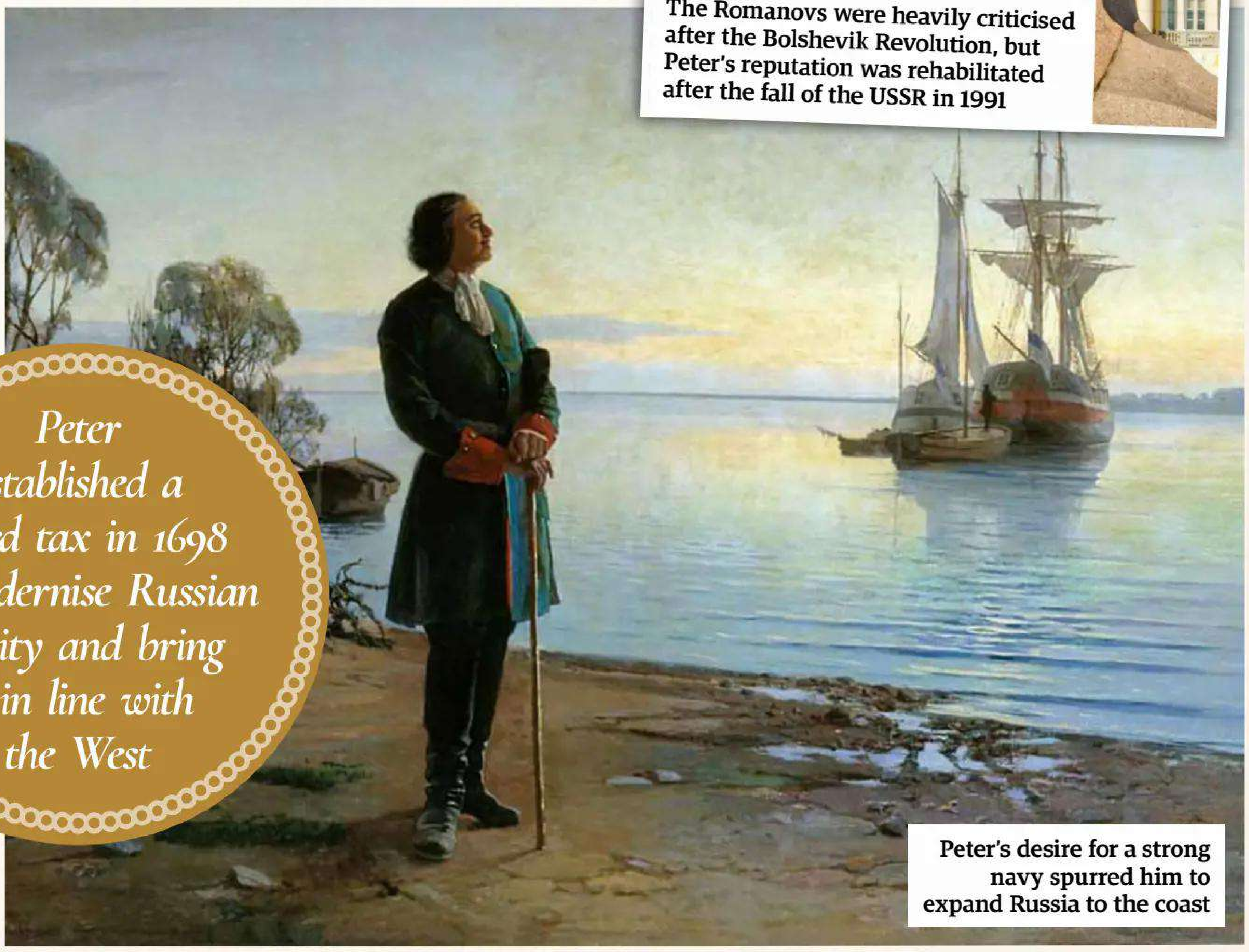
By the time Peter emerged from his mother's regency at the age of 22, he set about expanding Russia's borders to give it a better outlet to the sea. Although his kingdom stretched across north Asia from the Pacific to Europe, Peter's tiny navy only had a single base at Arkhangelsk. To make Russia a proper maritime power, he set his generals a long-term aim: take possession of the Baltic and Black Seas. Peter launched a campaign against Selim I Giray of the Crimean Khanate and the Khan's overlords in the Ottoman Empire, capturing the important port city of Azov in 1696. Then, Peter turned his attention to the north. After initial setbacks, Russian armies pushed back the Swedes in the Great Northern War. It took 20 years of conflict, but Russia eventually became the dominant power in the region.

While his armies ground down the Swedes in the Baltic, Peter pushed through a programme of modernisation at home. He introduced the first Russian newspaper. He reformed the institutions that governed Russia. He founded research and learning academies that debunked old superstitions, and he tried to industrialise his old-fashioned, agrarian economy. He also moved his capital to the new city of Saint Petersburg, close to Russia's European border. That window on the West spurred more European influence in a country that had spent two centuries expanding in the East. So great were the changes that Peter's title was changed in 1721. No longer was Peter the mere King of Russia – from now on, the Romanovs would be Emperors of Russia.

Peter established a beard tax in 1698 to modernise Russian soceity and bring it in line with the West

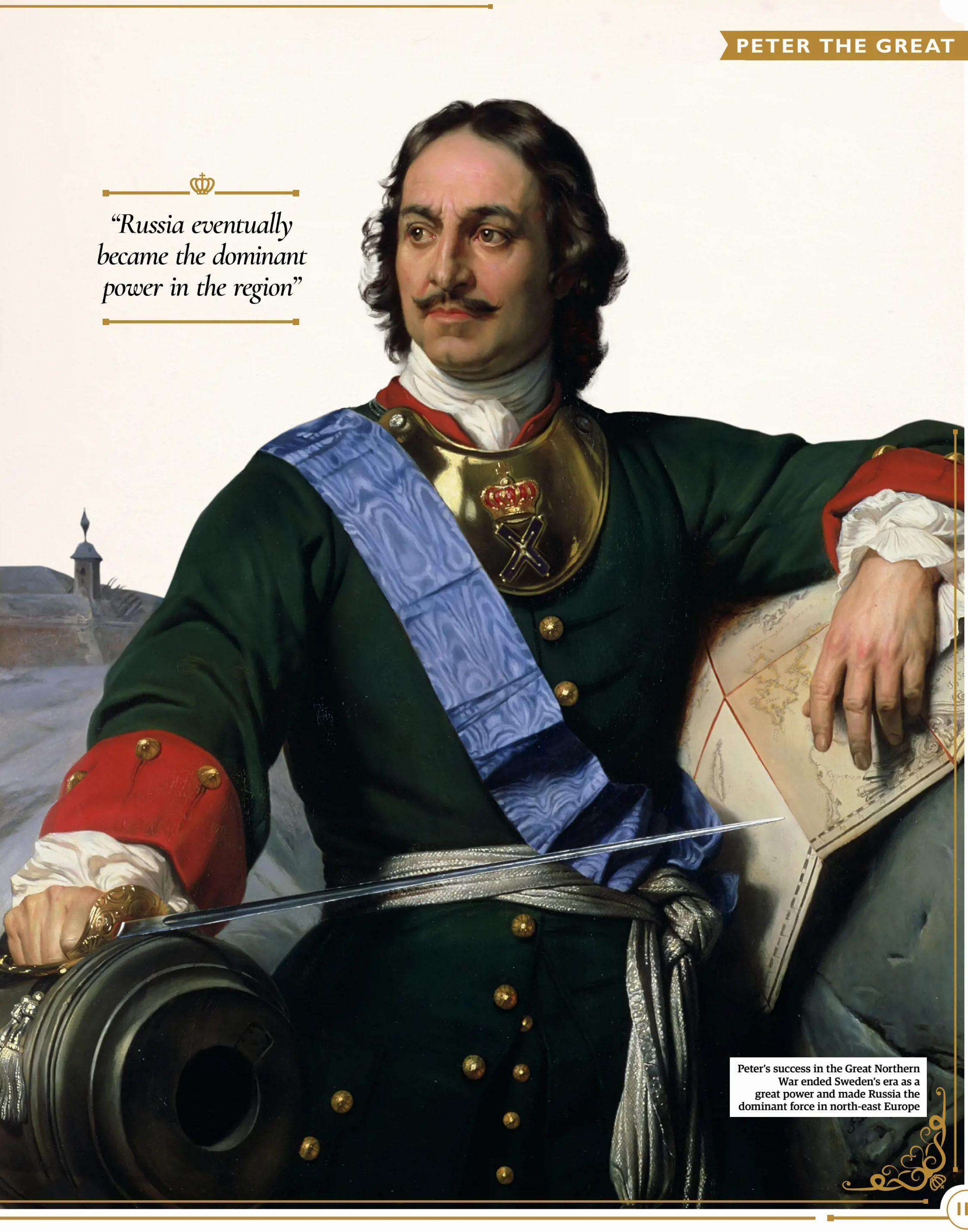
ПЕТРУ ПЕРВОМУ
ЕКАТЕРИНА ВТОРАЯ
ЛѢТА 1782

The Romanovs were heavily criticised after the Bolshevik Revolution, but Peter's reputation was rehabilitated after the fall of the USSR in 1991



Peter's desire for a strong navy spurred him to expand Russia to the coast

"Russia eventually became the dominant power in the region"



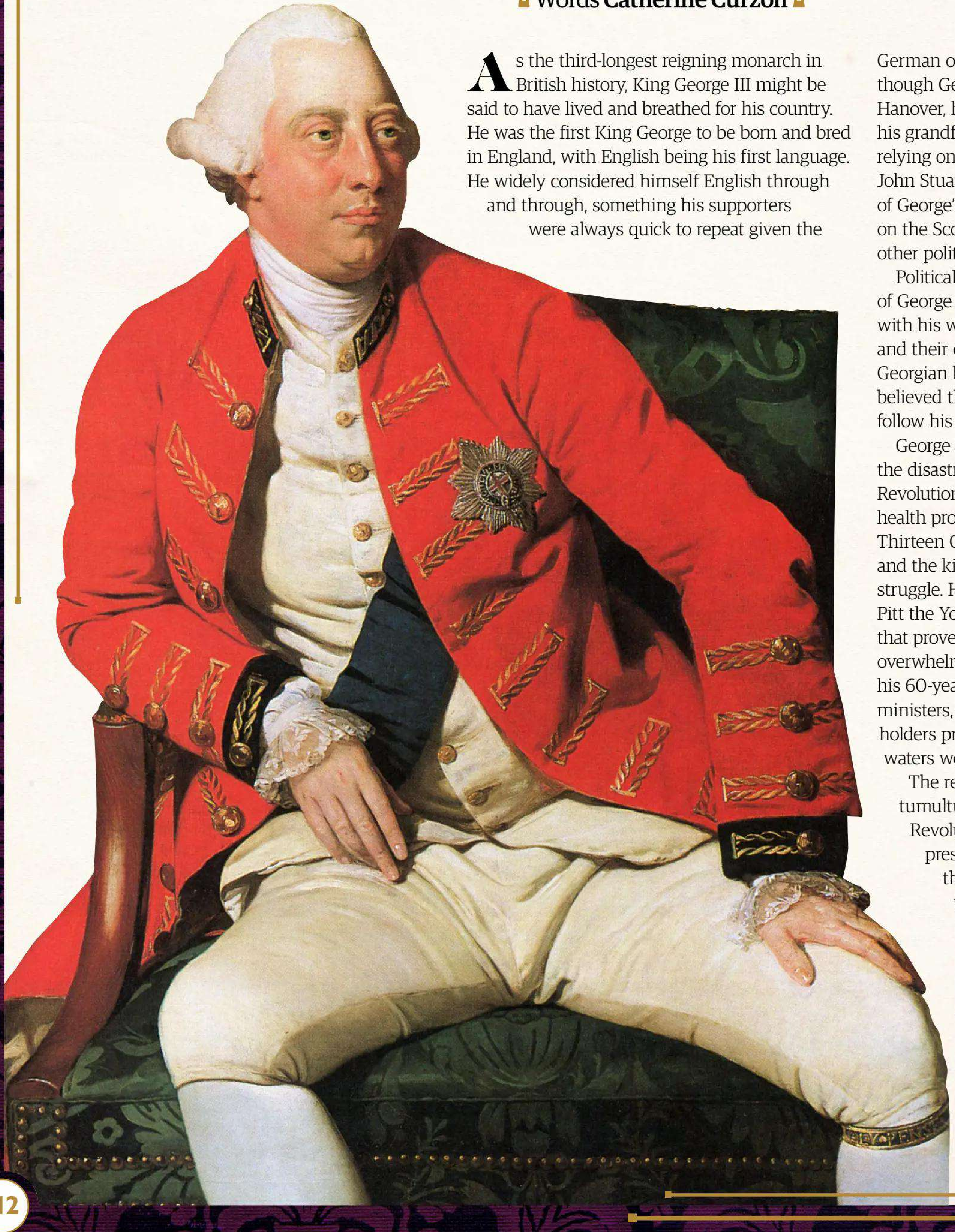
Peter's success in the Great Northern War ended Sweden's era as a great power and made Russia the dominant force in north-east Europe

Great Britain, 1760–1820

GEORGE III

Whether as the Mad King or the monarch who lost America, George III's reign is remembered for its dramas

Words **Catherine Curzon**



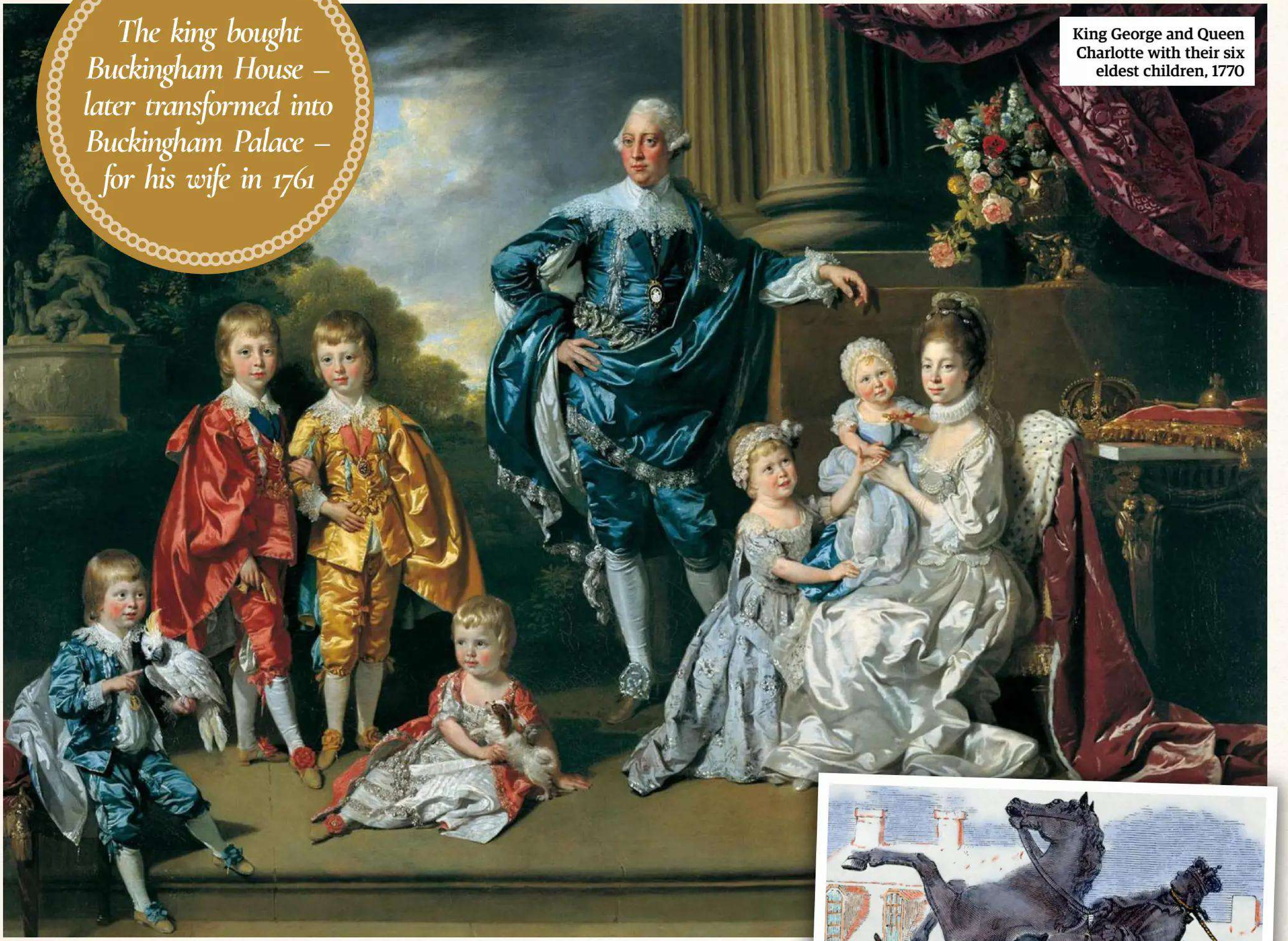
As the third-longest reigning monarch in British history, King George III might be said to have lived and breathed for his country. He was the first King George to be born and bred in England, with English being his first language. He widely considered himself English through and through, something his supporters were always quick to repeat given the German origins of his predecessors – and even though George was elector (and later king) of Hanover, he never went there. George succeeded his grandfather when he was just 22 years old, relying on the guidance of his childhood mentor John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute. Bute was a favourite of George's mother and the young king's reliance on the Scotsman soured his relationship with other politicians from the get-go.

Political instability marked much of the reign of George III, but he found solace in his home life with his wife, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and their children. He was unique among the Georgian kings for having no mistresses and believed that his family and nation alike should follow his own pious, reserved example.

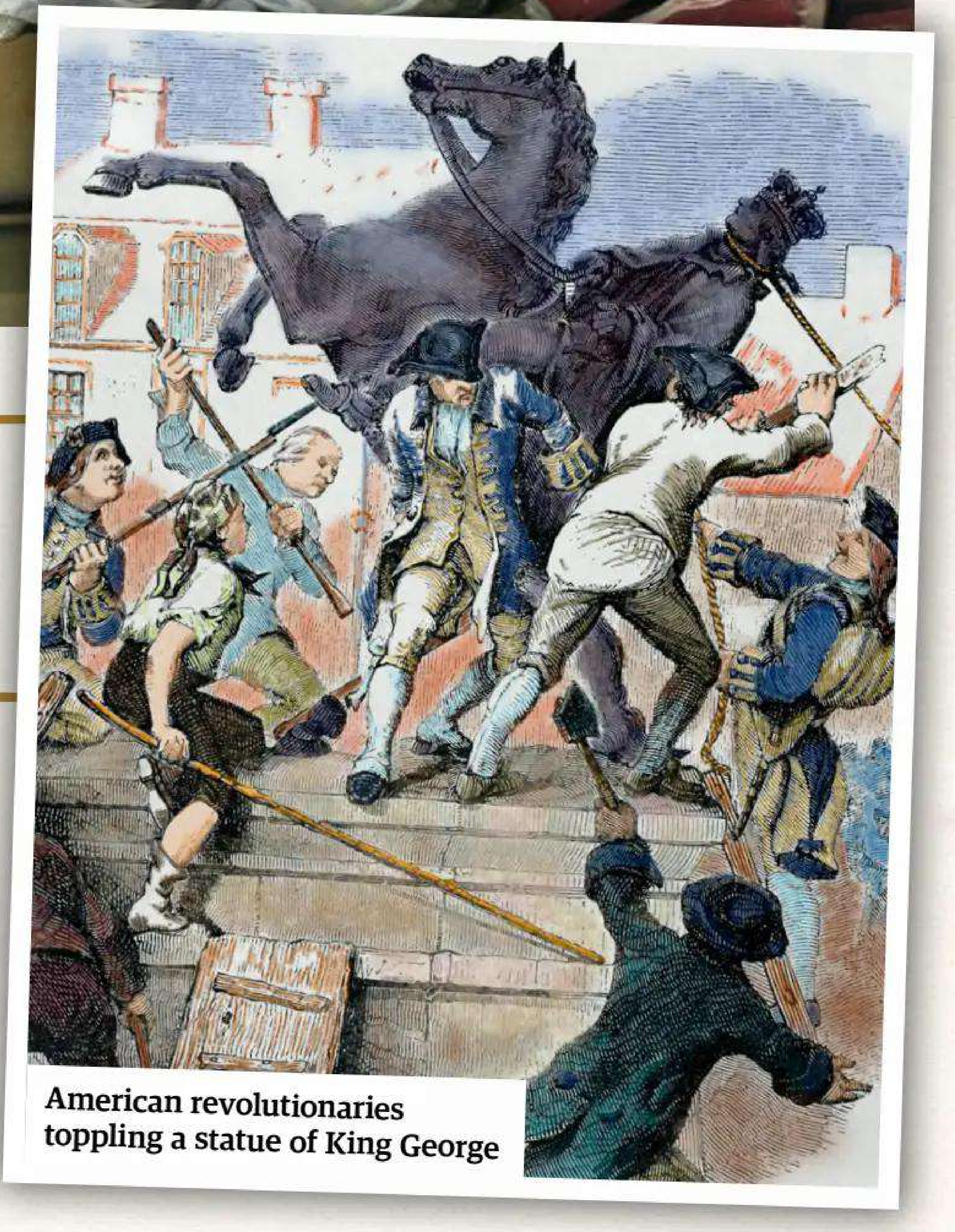
George III steered Britain through the disastrous and expensive American Revolutionary War, battling with his own mental health problems as he did so. The loss of the Thirteen Colonies caused turmoil in Parliament, and the king was sucked into the ensuing power struggle. He responded by appointing William Pitt the Younger as prime minister in a move that proved his political nous and won him overwhelming popularity across the nation. In his 60-year reign, George knew 14 different prime ministers, with the six Tory and eight Whig office holders proving just how changeable the political waters were during the period.

The reign of George III covered some tumultuous times, with the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars pressing on the Continent. At home, the Irish Rebellion of 1798 was a timely reminder that trouble could be found on less-distant shores. In 1800, the Acts of Union created the United Kingdom, but George stopped short of granting the Irish Catholic emancipation, which he believed would be contrary to his coronation oath. Pitt had already

The king bought Buckingham House – later transformed into Buckingham Palace – for his wife in 1761



King George and Queen Charlotte with their six eldest children, 1770



American revolutionaries toppling a statue of King George

“In his 60-year reign, George knew 14 different prime ministers”

made promises of Catholic emancipation and the king's resistance was the final straw for their always difficult relationship. Pitt resigned in 1801, though he would return to serve as prime minister three years later.

Amidst all of this turmoil, it is easy to overlook other aspects of George and his reign. A cultured monarch, George was the first king to study science and had his own astronomical observatory. He was known for his interest in agriculture, a passion that earned him the nickname 'Farmer George', and he amassed a huge collection of books and manuscripts in his lifetime. Unsurprisingly, art and science flourished during his reign, and he was a patron of several artists, including Thomas Gainsborough and Johann Zoffany. He even founded the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768.

After years in the care of Dr Francis Willis, George III's madness eventually claimed him following the death of his beloved youngest daughter, Amelia, in 1810. Though earlier episodes of what may have been porphyria or bipolar disorder had been overcome, this time he didn't recover his wits. Following the transition of power to his son, George, Prince Regent, in 1811, the ailing king retired permanently to Windsor Castle where his health began to fail at an alarming rate. It was here that he died in 1820 and his passing was mourned by the nation that he had served.

Images Getty Images, Alamy

THE FIRST (and last) KING of HAITI

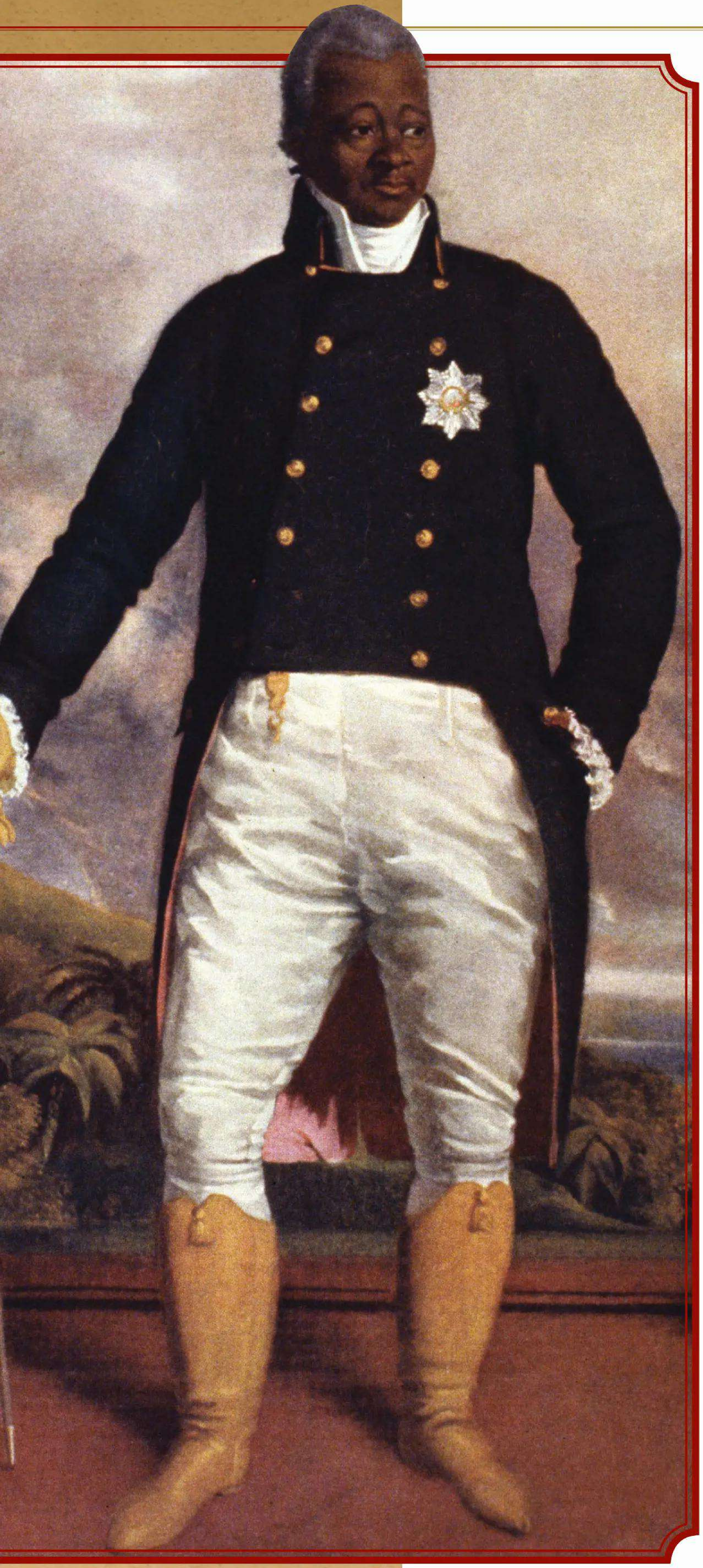
The short-lived monarchy of Henry Christophe, rebel leader of the Haitian Revolution

Words **Paul Clammer**

EXPERT BIO

PAUL CLAMMER

Paul Clammer is a freelance writer and author with over 40 guidebooks for Lonely Planet and the Bradt Travel Guides' book *Haiti*, the first standalone book for the country in English since the 1980s. He's been travelling to Haiti since 2007, including a year living in Port-au-Prince.



In November 1815, Londoners were treated to one of the grandest exhibitions of craftsmanship the city had seen for some time. 23 state carriages were put on public display in Charles Street, Marylebone. No one who saw them failed to be awed by their magnificence, from the gilt mouldings of the bodywork topped with crowned phoenixes and the finely painted coats of arms on the panels, to the luscious velvet interiors fringed with gold drapery. The carriages, along with harnesses, crimson saddles and silver-clawed tiger skin saddlecloths, had cost the coachmakers Crowther and Tapp an estimated £12,000 to make.

"It is to be lamented that more time is not allowed the public," wrote The Morning Chronicle, "to witness one of the grandest specimens of art and elegance ever combined in one piece of work of the kind that has been sent from this country." The same week the newspaper had cooed over a set of satin gowns "finished by one of our fashionable dress-makers" along with pieces from the Prince Regent's own jeweller, cut-glass chandeliers, damask cloths and marble busts. The purchaser was Henry Christophe, who had crowned himself King Henry I of Haiti only four years earlier, the ruler of a free Black kingdom in a Caribbean dominated by colonial slavery.

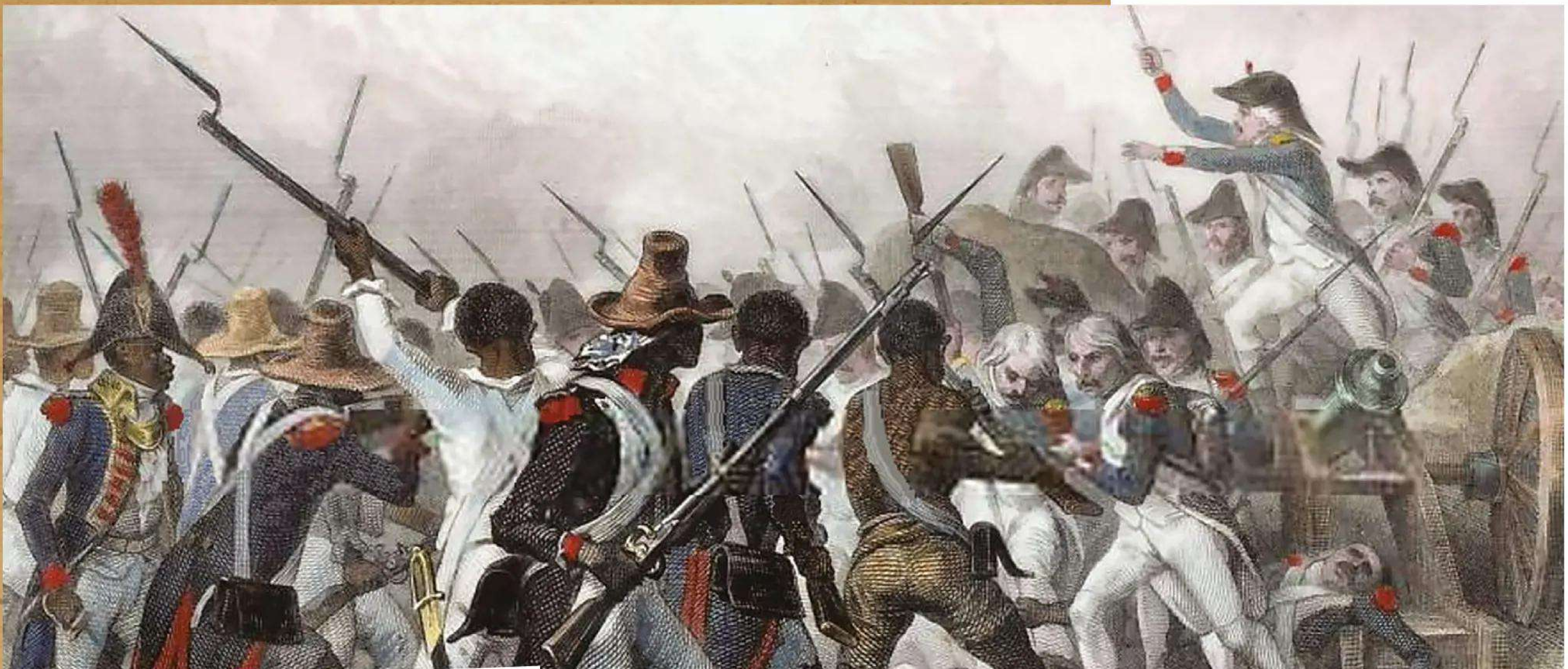
Although he remains little remembered today outside his home country, Christophe was a familiar figure to the Londoners who read about his spending sprees across the capital. The celebrated abolitionist William Wilberforce was such a prominent supporter of him that pro-slavery critics claimed he was quicker to toast a Black king than he was the English monarch George III. Wilberforce had helped send teachers to the nascent kingdom to aid in its development, along with the painter Richard Evans, who had been a student to the society portraitist Sir Thomas Lawrence. Christophe returned the favour by gifting Wilberforce his portrait, which was duly hung at the Royal Academy.

Christophe had risen to power through the tumultuous events of the Haitian Revolution (1791 - 1804). He had been a trusted lieutenant of the mercurial Toussaint Louverture, who had led his people to the brink of independence from France only to be captured by his enemies and shipped off to die in an icy French dungeon. The crowds in London would have quickly recalled the broad outlines of Christophe's story: how Haiti had been split by civil war soon after it had freed itself from French rule, and how Christophe had created a kingdom for himself in the north of the country. For a decade, he had been a staple of the English newspapers, and stories of his wealth were legion. His likeness had even appeared in a London waxwork show.

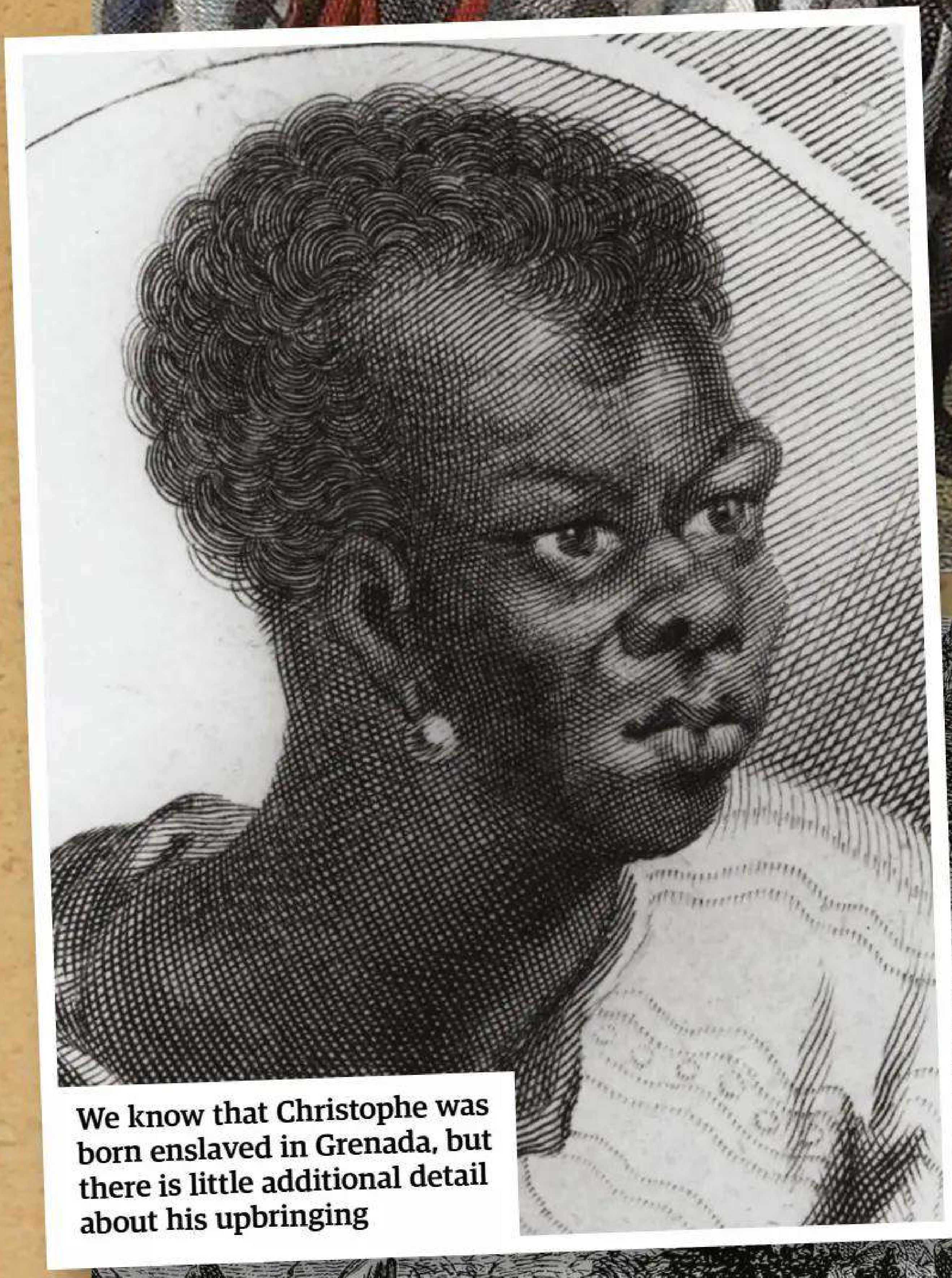
Like all the protagonists of the Haitian Revolution, Christophe had come from the humblest of backgrounds. He was born enslaved on the British Caribbean island of Grenada in 1767. Little is known of his origins, though in later life he voiced his distrust of the sea due to the privations his father had suffered undergoing the Middle Passage from Africa in the belly of a slave ship. Nothing is known of his mother.

In 1779, when Christophe was on the cusp of his 12th birthday, Grenada was captured by France. The victorious fleet then headed for the French colony of Saint-Domingue on the island of Hispaniola, carrying the child as part of the spoils of war. Saint-Domingue was at the time one of the richest and most profitable

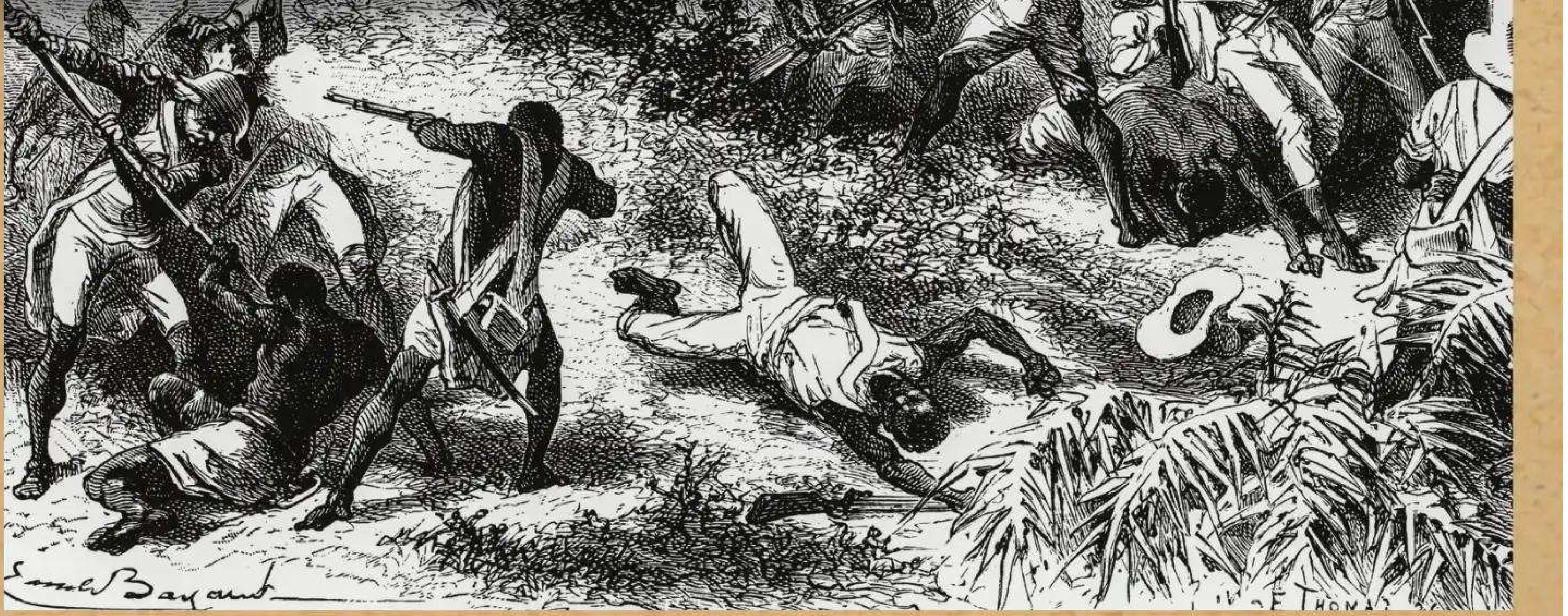
Images Alamy, Paul Clammer



Many of the men involved in leading the Haitian Revolution had previous military training



We know that Christophe was born enslaved in Grenada, but there is little additional detail about his upbringing



The Haitian Revolution was a massive uprising against colonial rule and slavery

places in the world. Fully two-thirds of the world's sugar and half of its coffee came from the colony, produced by nearly half a million enslaved Africans.

In the city of Cap Français (now Cap-Haïtien, Haiti's second city), the young Christophe would have been amazed when the fleet took on a battalion of free Black militia troops to ferry them to North America to support the rebellious colonists in their independence struggle against Britain. The Chasseurs Volontaires were representatives of the colony's small free Black community who were trying to find a place for themselves in a slave colony by pledging their loyalty to the metropole. A month later, they were in action at the Siege of Savannah in Georgia. The regimental muster rolls have long since been lost, but by all accounts, Christophe joined their ranks as a drummer boy and may even have been wounded in action. At the conclusion of the campaign, he returned to Cap Français with his comrades, nominally free, and found work in a tavern that was presciently called La Couronne ('The Crown').

When the first fires of the Haitian Revolution set Saint-Domingue ablaze in August 1791, Christophe was a member of the Cap Français militia. He did not immediately throw in his lot with the slave armies but became a supporter of the French revolutionary commissioners who took charge of the city, and even helped defend it against white royalist counter-revolutionary forces in a fight that saw his city almost burned to the ground. It was only when general emancipation was declared in the summer of 1793, followed by Toussaint Louverture's transition from rebel general to leader of the French republican army in the colony, that Christophe became a fully-fledged revolutionary. Under Louverture's tutelage, he rose rapidly through the ranks.

By 1802, when Napoleon Bonaparte sent an army to recapture the colony and reinstate slavery, Christophe was commander of Cap Français and put the city to the torch rather than surrender it to the French. Nearly two years of bloody conflict ensued, but when the French were worn down by incessant guerrilla warfare and tropical diseases they finally quit the island. When Haiti became free on New Year's Day 1804, Christophe's was the second signature on the declaration of independence, after that of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, another formerly enslaved general who had succeeded Louverture as commander of the free armies.

Dessalines and Christophe inherited a country in ruins that was born into a hostile neighbourhood. All the imperial powers in the Caribbean were terrified of revolutionary contagion; British Jamaica lay barely 200km from Haiti's westernmost tip. Furthermore, there was a great internal tension about what Haitian freedom actually meant. For the generals, like Dessalines and Christophe, independence only meant something if it could be defended from its enemies, and so they sought to rebuild the ravaged plantations, forcing labourers back to work to produce export crops with which they could buy gunpowder to ward against the return of the French. For the Haitian citizens, however, many of whom had been born in Africa and brought to the Caribbean against their will, freedom meant personal liberty and the right to be left alone, free from the oversight of any master, irrespective of their colour.

Within two years of Haitian independence, Dessalines was both crowned as emperor and then murdered in a conspiracy led by former members of Saint-Domingue's free coloured community who objected to his plans to nationalise agriculture. They nominated Christophe as his replacement as president, while reducing the position to that of a mere figurehead. It was this constitutional fix that Christophe chose to settle by force, leading his armies south to lay siege to Port-au-Prince.

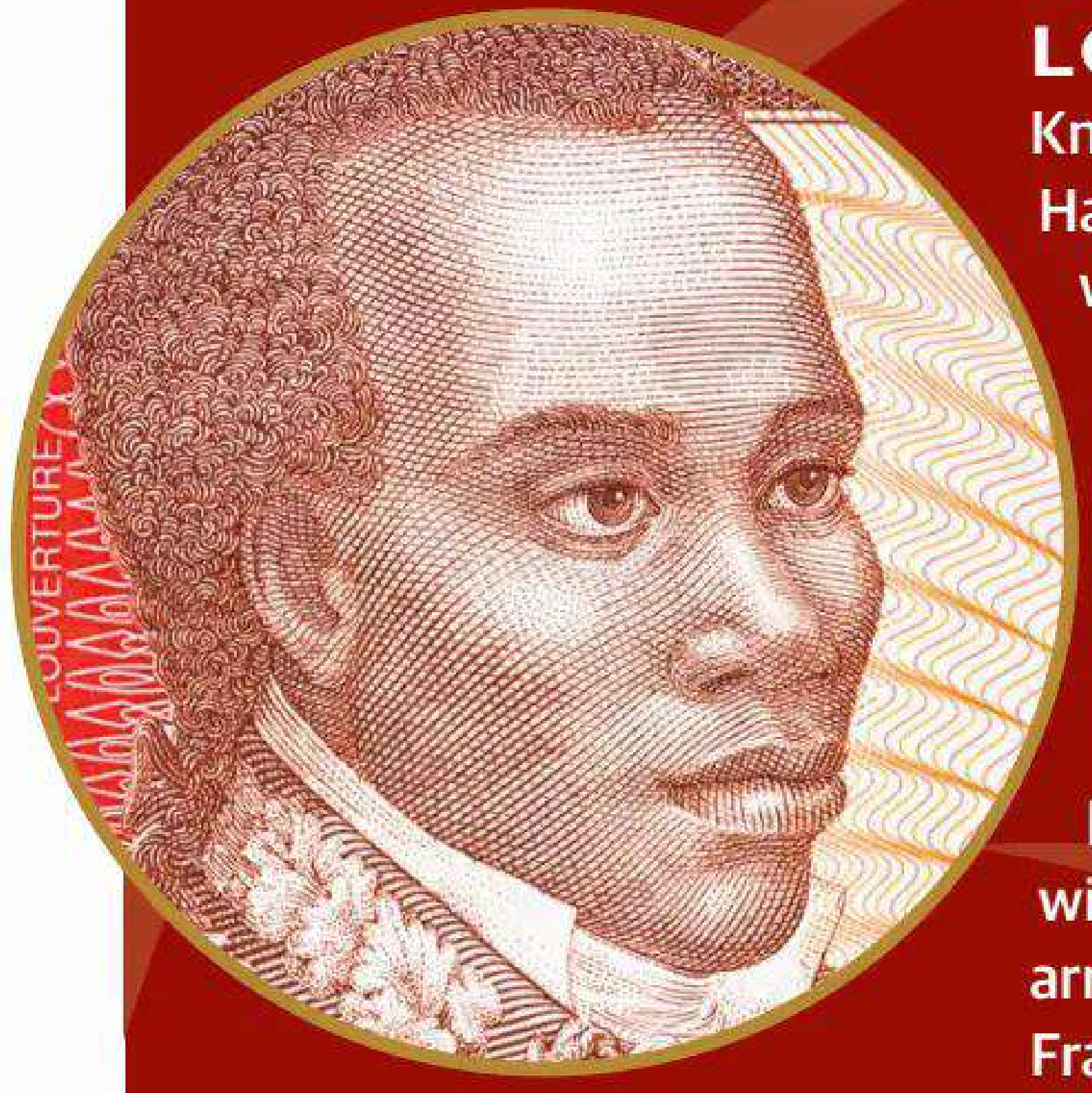
The Haitian soldiers who had prevailed over the French fought each other to a stalemate and the country became divided by civil war. Christophe's rival was Alexandre Pétion, who denounced Christophe as a dictator then took all power from his senate and eventually had himself proclaimed president for life. In 1811, Christophe chose a different path and had himself proclaimed the "first crowned monarch of the New World", with the northern half of the country renamed the Kingdom of Haiti.

From a modern perspective where we read revolutions as the precursors to republics, the creation of a monarchy feels like a retrograde step, but in this new Age of Revolutions, there were few models to follow. France had killed its king but then crowned Napoleon as emperor. "Though we appear in the same hypothetical situation as the Americans," declared Christophe's Council of State as it rejected presidential rule, "being a new people, still we possess the wants, the manners, the virtues, and we will add, the vices of the old states." Indeed, there were important local precedents: before the arrival of Columbus, Hispaniola had been ruled by hereditary chiefs called caciques, and the most celebrated of all had been called Enrique (Henry).

> *"Christophe had come from the humblest of backgrounds"*

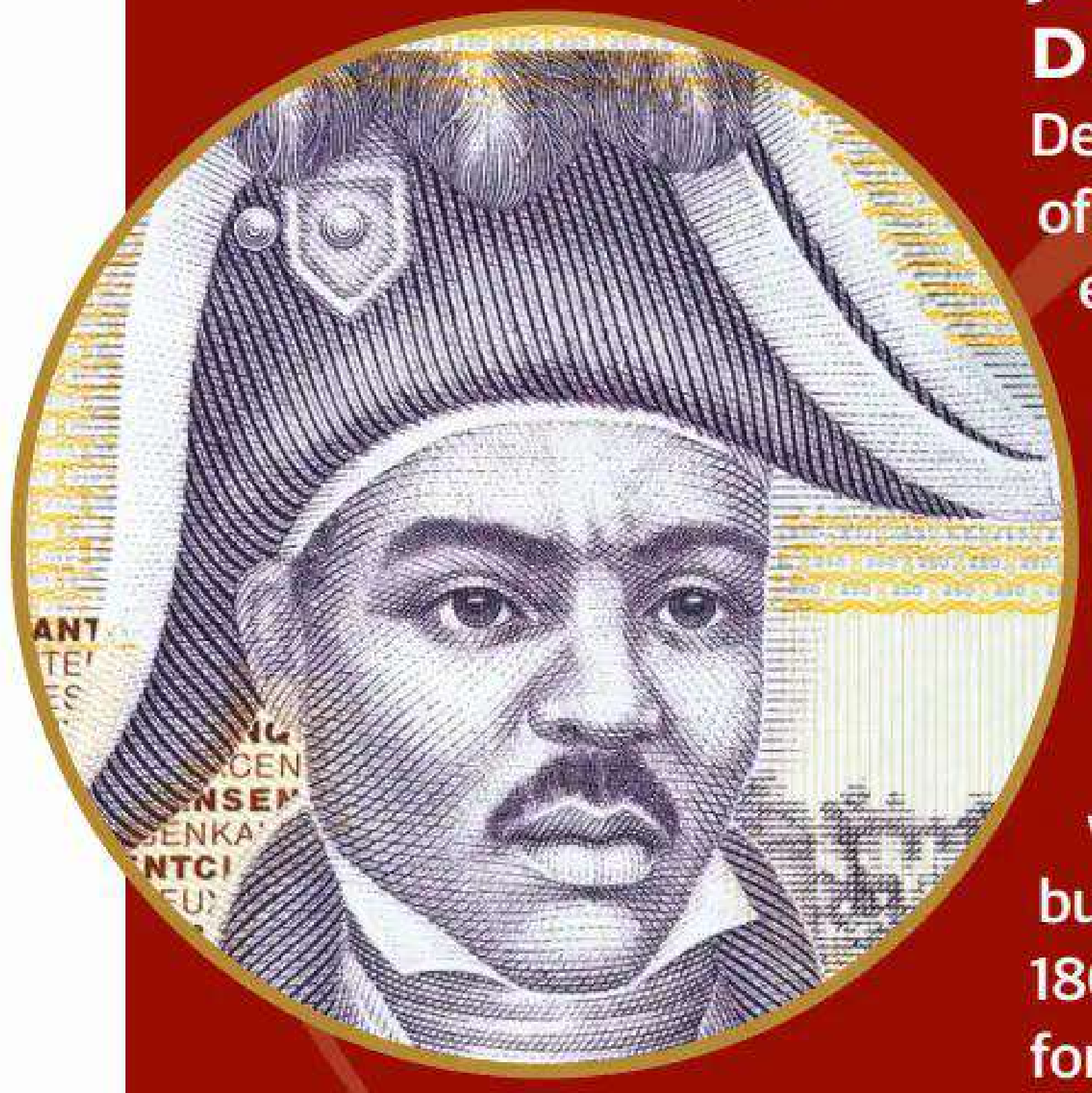
REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS

The Haitians who helped forge a new nation



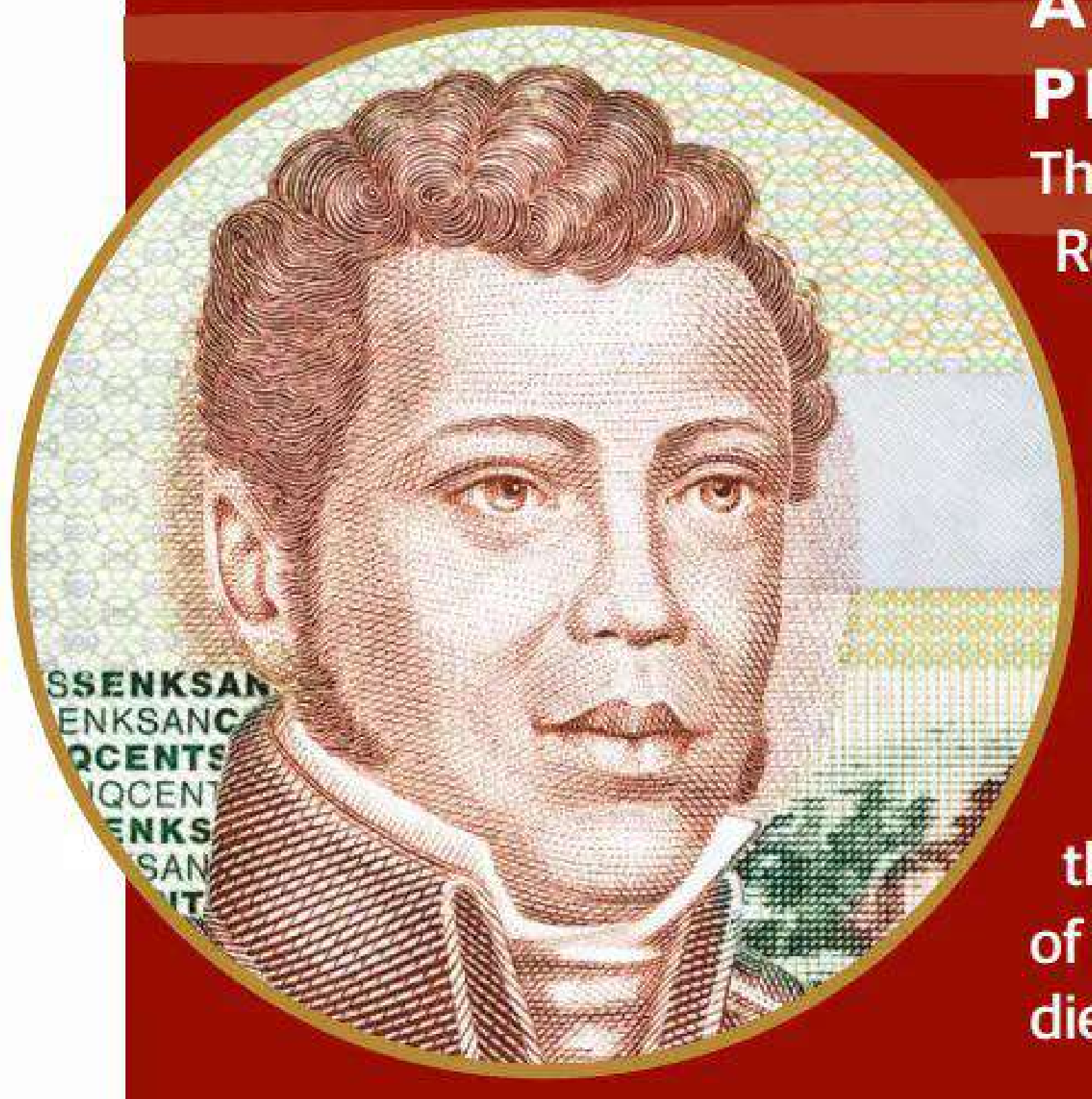
TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE

Known as the 'Father of Haiti', Louverture is credited with turning what started out as a slave rebellion into an organised and effective revolution. Under his leadership, Haiti established its independence, but when he was invited to negotiate with the French, he was arrested and deported to France, where he died in custody.



JEAN-JACQUES DESSALINES

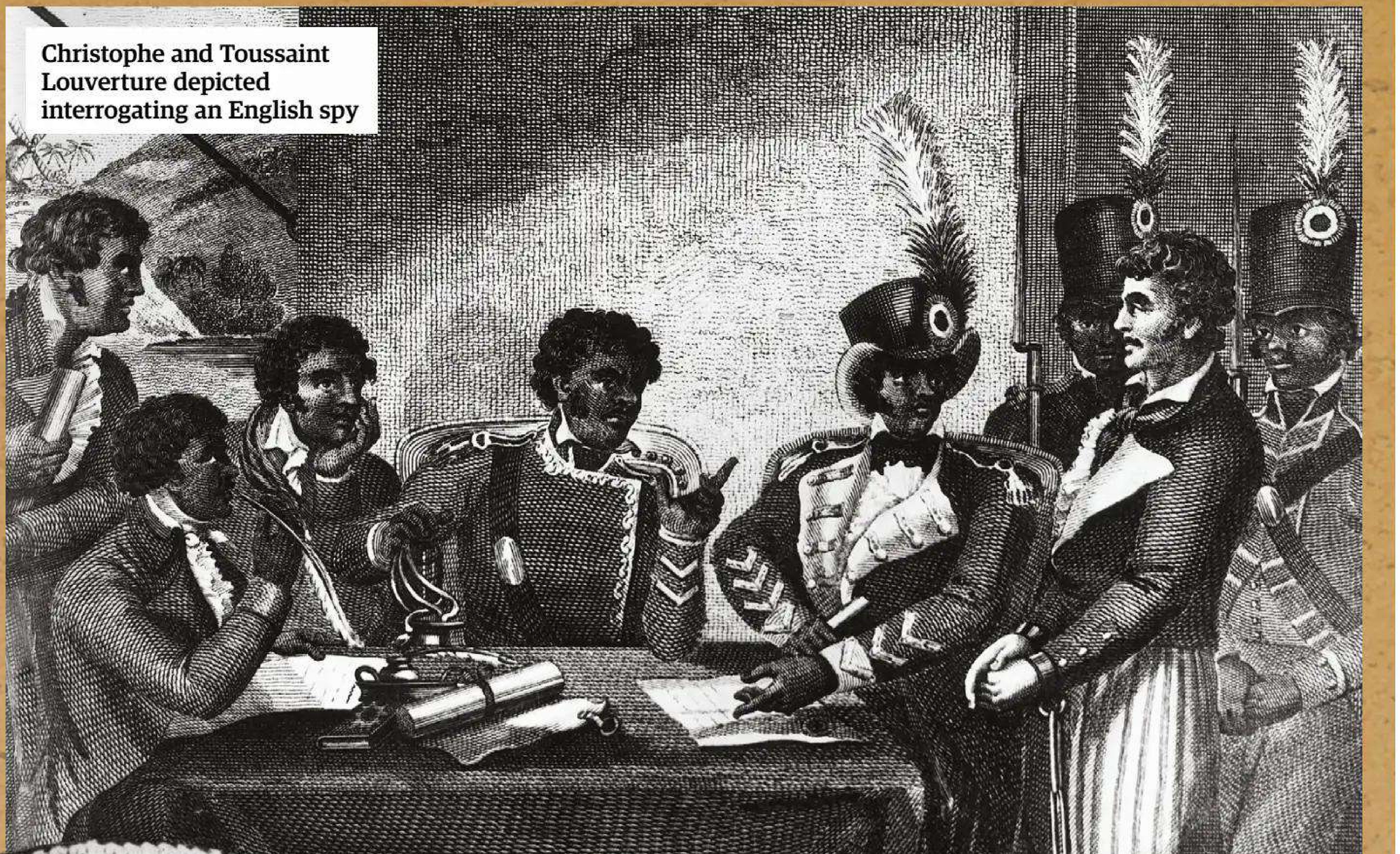
Dessalines was the first leader of fully independent Haiti as emperor of Haiti from 1804. It was under his rule that the island was the first nation in the Americas to abolish slavery completely. He took over leadership from Louverture after he was captured by the French, but was himself assassinated in 1806, possibly by some of his former allies.



ALEXANDRE PÉTION

The first president of the Republic of Haiti, Pétion ruled in the south as an elected ruler in opposition to Christophe's autocratic rule in the north. However, he would later make himself president for life, having become disenchanted with the conflicts that arose out of the democratic process. He died from yellow fever in 1818.

Images Alamy, Getty Images



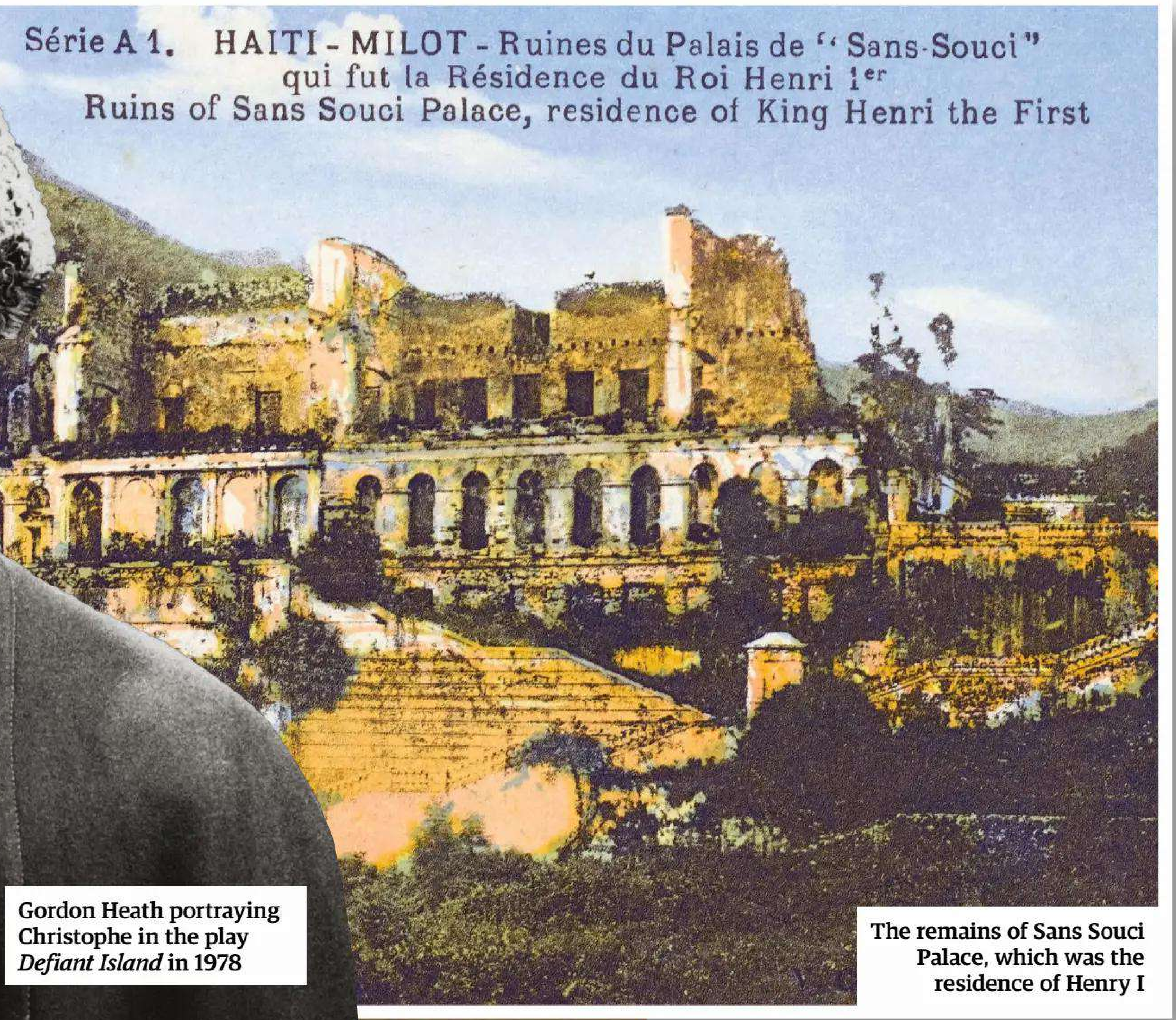
Christophe and Toussaint Louverture depicted interrogating an English spy

Furthermore, many Haitians had been born in African kingdoms and recognised monarchies as a natural form of government.

This mix of Africa and the Caribbean was reflected in the heraldry created for the king and the raft of nobles created among his supporters. Elephants, iguanas, rhinos and manatees jostled for space on the coats of arms among the beasts of classical mythology and traditional European heraldic devices.

Christophe envisaged his kingdom as somewhere that could fulfil the true potential of the Enlightenment, while rejecting the cruel racism that had led to European colonial slavery. It published books and newspapers, introduced smallpox vaccination, enacted some of the world's first laws against animal cruelty and exported sugar and coffee created from the labour of free men and women. No wonder that Wilberforce was such a supporter. When the Code Henry was published, a nearly 800-page book of law that codified almost every aspect of life in the kingdom and guaranteed agricultural labourers a share of the plantation profits and basic access to healthcare, the president of the Royal Society Sir Joseph Banks declared it worthy of being written in letters of gold:

Gordon Heath portraying Christophe in the play *Defiant Island* in 1978


Série A 1. HAITI - MILOT - Ruines du Palais de "Sans-Souci"
qui fut la Résidence du Roi Henri 1er
Ruins of Sans Souci Palace, residence of King Henri the First

The remains of Sans Souci Palace, which was the residence of Henry I

> *“Christophe envisaged his kingdom as somewhere that could fulfil the true potential of the Enlightenment”*

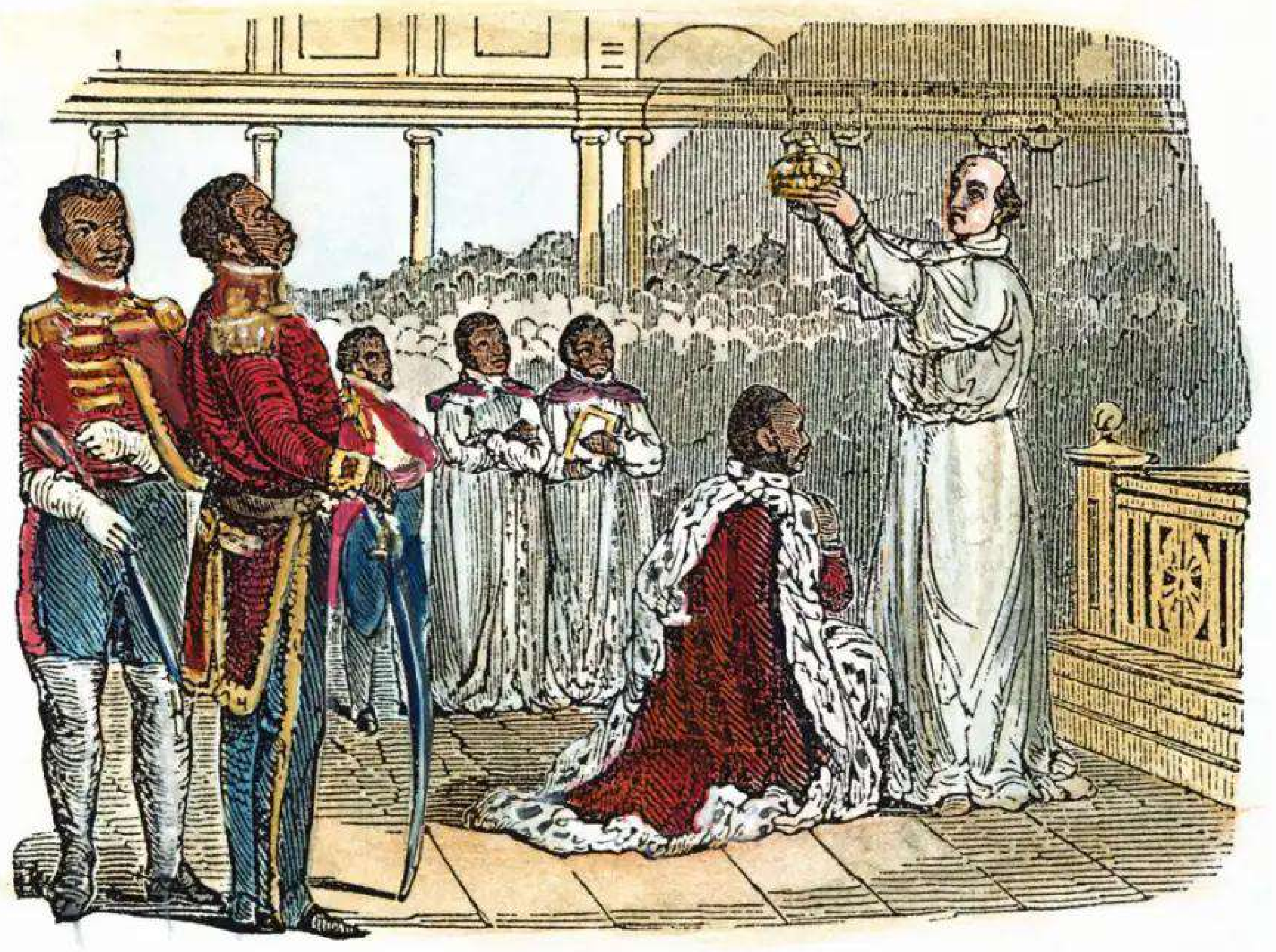
“Nothing that white men have been able to arrange is equal to it.” But the farm labourers themselves were rather less impressed; it was their labour – enforced by draconian policing – that was paying for the kingdom's new glories.

The extraordinary palace of Sans Souci was built as the centrepiece of the new kingdom, a fabulous tropical Versailles that was home to the royal printing press, mint and academy of arts. Above it, Christophe raised the enormous mountain-top Citadelle Henry that could garrison several thousand soldiers and to this day remains the largest fortress in the Americas.

Only one thing eluded Christophe's grasp: diplomatic recognition. At his coronation, attended by officers of a visiting Royal Navy frigate, he toasted his “brother monarch” George III, and gave favoured status to British merchants. The spending sprees of his British agents were deliberate acts of soft power designed to curry favour with London, but recognition never came. After the Congress of Vienna settled the Napoleonic Wars, Britain was content to defer to French wishes over their lost colony, and the colonial lobby in Paris was still howling at the loss of Saint-Domingue.

Christophe's supporters in Britain were seduced by the royal proclamations, but the reality of the kingdom didn't always match the headlines. When Christophe was laid low after suffering a very public stroke while at Mass at the age of 52, the roots of his power were shown to be very shallow indeed. No books of law, newspapers or support of foreign abolitionists could shore up his reign. Four months later, a regiment in the south of the kingdom mutinied after being forced to labour on public works: ironically they'd been ordered to shore up border defences for fear that Christophe's illness might provoke a move against the kingdom from Port-au-Prince. In the kingdom's capital the Duc de Marmelade, General Jean-Pierre Richard, refused orders to quash the rebellion and instead tore off his insignia and declared the monarchy was dead.

This new contagion spread rapidly. Within a day, soldiers at Sans Souci were abandoning their monarch. The half-paralysed Christophe couldn't even mount his horse to give orders to his last loyal troops. Refusing to give his rivals the satisfaction of parading him as a prisoner, he retreated to his chamber and shot himself in the heart. The palace was given over to an orgy of looting that lasted two weeks until the arrival of an army from Port-au-Prince, led by Pétion's successor President Jean-Pierre Boyer, restored order and finally reunified Haiti's two warring halves.



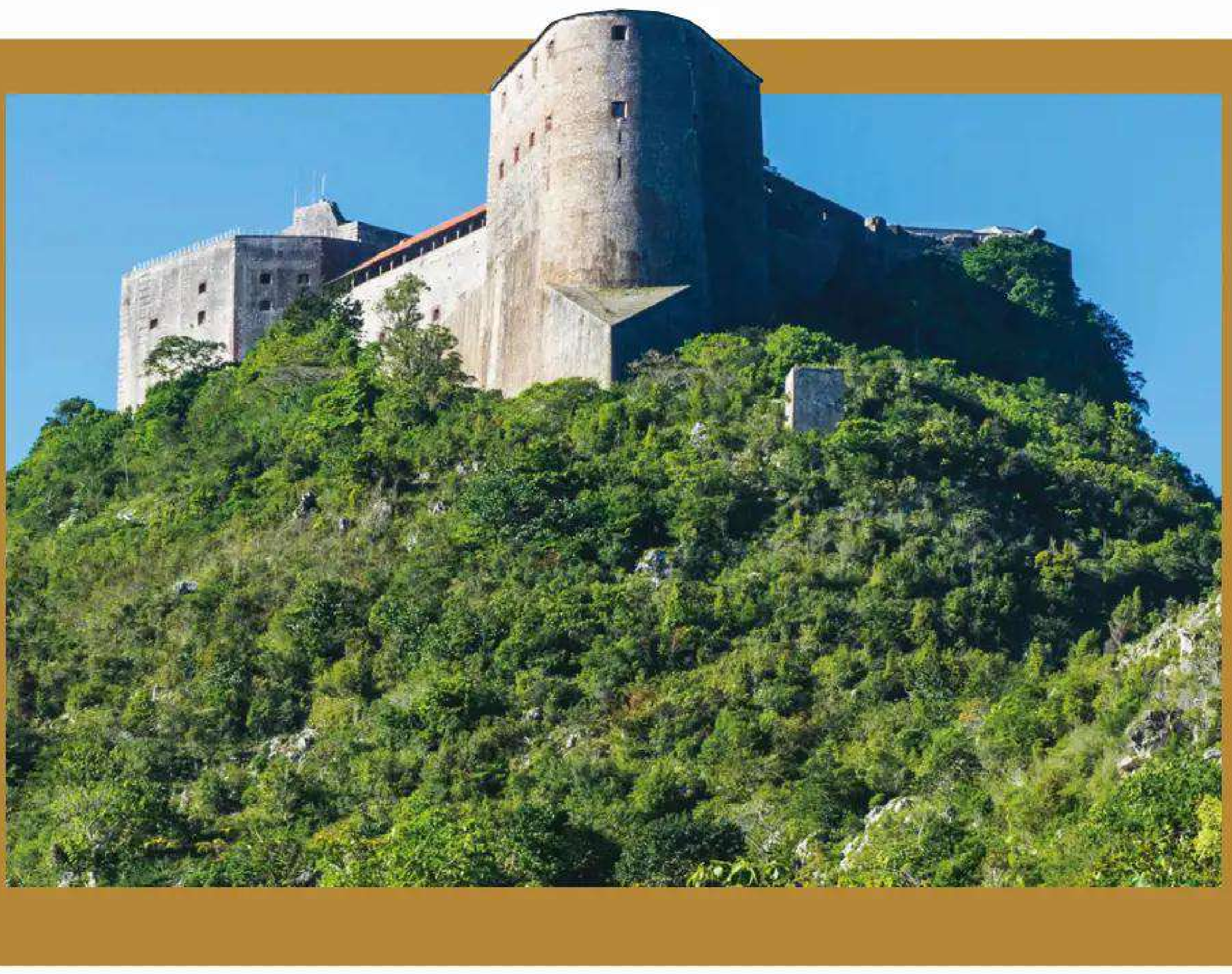
ABOVE In 1811 Christophe was crowned king of the Kingdom of Haiti

Christophe forged a kingdom by force of personality, but his vision of a proud and modern nation claiming its rightful place on the world stage had failed to carry his people with him. Haiti's plantation system died with the king. Sugar plantations were left to turn fallow as people turned to individual subsistence plots or easily harvested wild coffee and cacao. When gunboats forced Boyer to contract an indemnity with France in 1825 of 150 million francs in return for recognition of Haitian independence, tax revenues could barely cover the interest payments, condemning the country to penury. It took until 1947 for all the associated debts to be repaid – a debt of $21 billion paid over 143 years to the country it had won its freedom from by force of arms. When certificates were issued to celebrate this financial independence, they were decorated with an image of the Citadelle Henry, the fortress that Christophe had always intended to be the last line of defence against foreign control of the country.

A KING'S FORTRESS

The impressive Citadelle Henry explained

The imposing Citadelle Henry, or Citadelle Laferrière as it is also known, was built from 1806 and completed in 1820. The original construction of a series of fortifications had been plotted by Christophe's predecessor as the return of the French was an ongoing concern. The fortress sits on the Bonnet a L'Eveque mountain and, according to the citadel's own website, is referred to by locals the 'Eighth Wonder of the World'. It has much to commend it to such a title, being the largest fortress in the Americas, designed to house the local population while raining fire on the surroundings to keep enemies from destroying the new kingdom. It had 365 cannons, many of them obtained from European monarchs and carrying their crests, which you can still see today. Damaged, ultimately, only by weather and time, the Citadelle Henry remains a symbol of Haitian independence.



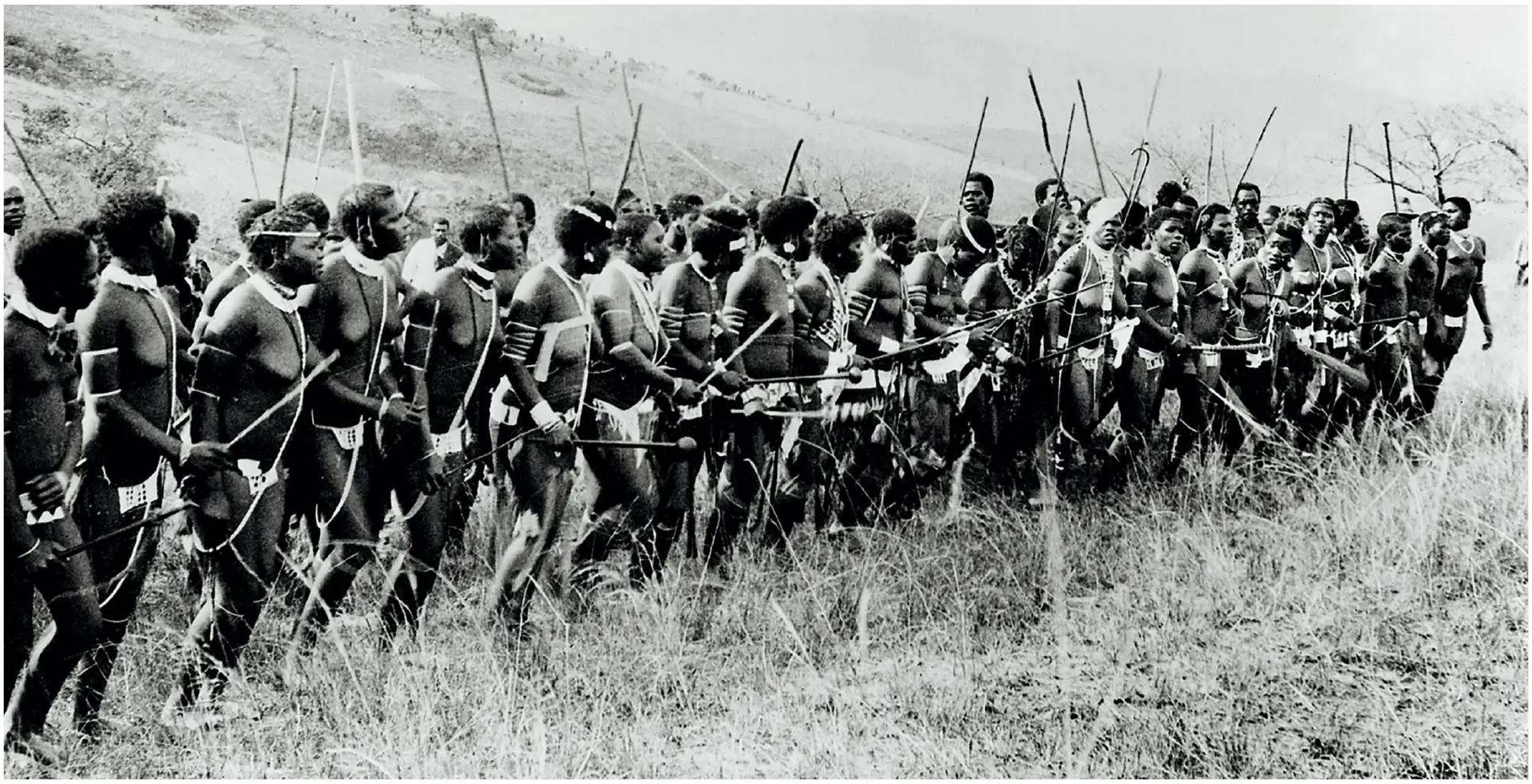
Images Alamy, Getty Images

RISE OF THE ZULU EMPIRE

SHAKA

How an exile used war and political guile to become Africa's conquering king

Words **Jonathan Gordon**



Who was the real Shaka kaSenzangakhona? Despot? Illegitimate usurper? Moderniser? Skilled diplomat? Bloody tyrant? Unfortunately, we're not entirely sure, as Shaka's history is entwined with the motives of those who used his tale. One source for Shaka's life are the notes taken by Western colonisers and traders, often looking to push the agenda of a savage African king or hoping to boost book sales through salacious accounts of atrocities. Our other source is the oral history of the people themselves, often recorded many years after the event and sometimes coloured by the people who succeeded Shaka, hoping to raise or diminish him depending on their agenda.

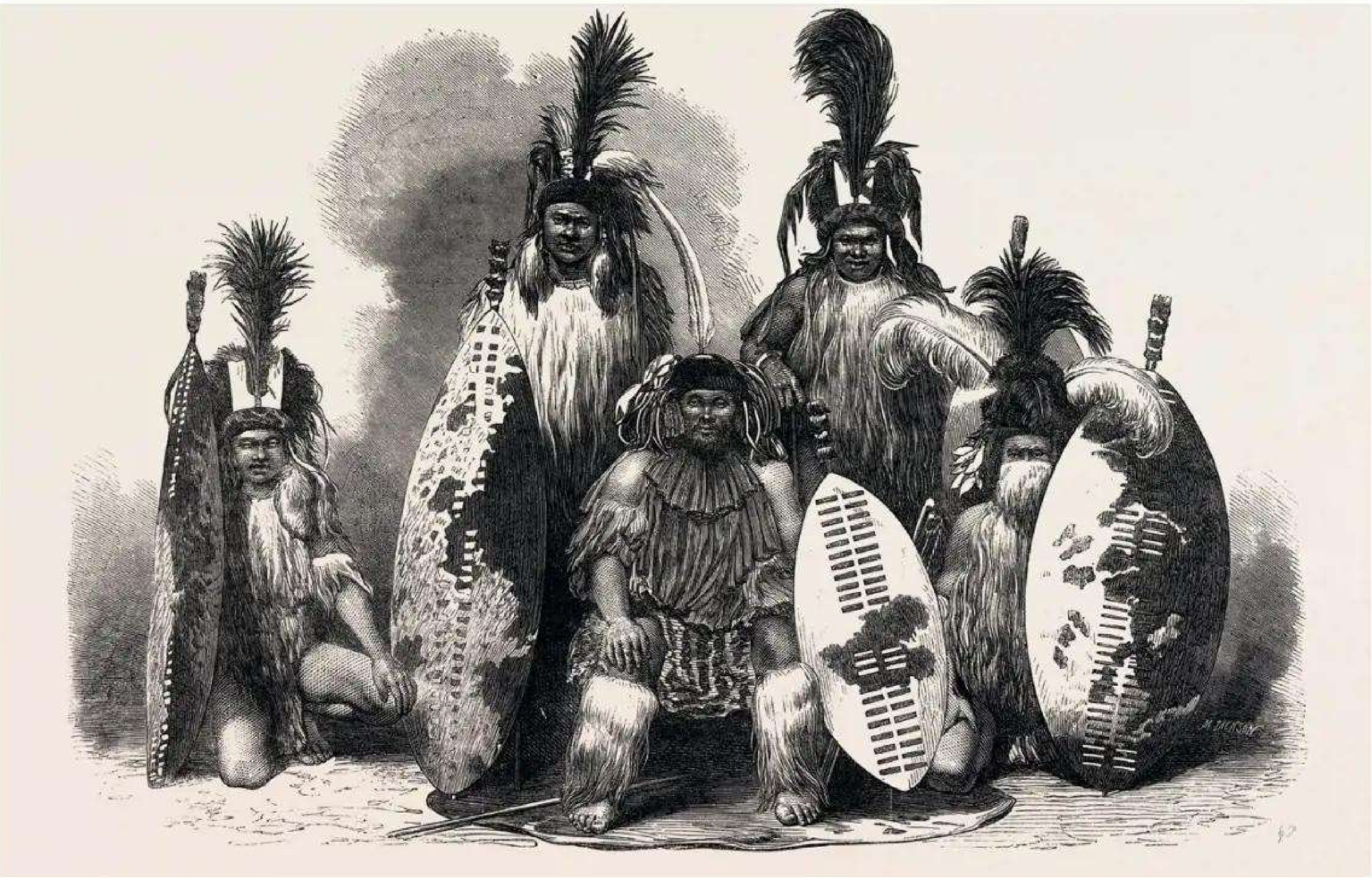
So, is there anything about Shaka's life we can be assured is true? Thankfully, yes. There's enough detail scattered through all of these sources to see an image of a king emerge, albeit one packed with caveats and requiring some scepticism. What we can certainly do is deflate and explain some of the myths around Shaka and explain why they exist. Shaka has become an icon, used to this day as a pillar of Zulu identity. His legend has value to people and that in itself is worth examination.

BEFORE SHAKA

Shaka was born into a region dominated by clans working on a kind of tributary system. When his father, Senzangakhona, was chief of the Zulu, they were a lower-level chiefdom situated in the valley of the White Mfolozi River, paying tribute to the Mthethwa to their south-east. The Mthethwa were one of three major chiefdoms to whom everyone else was paying tribute, the others being the Ngwane (later the Swazi) and the Ndwandwe. These three groups vied with each other through the late 18th century and into the early 19th century for control of the region. It was a landscape with an array of terrain and soil types, which was perfect for farming a variety of crops and grazing animals.

As the new century began, new chiefs emerged that would shape the next decades. Zwide became the leader of the Ndwandwe around 1805 and would reign for about 15 years before he fatally crossed paths with Shaka, and Dingiswayo became the chief of the Mthethwa in 1806. Around the same time as Dingiswayo, Senzangakhona reached maturity and became chief of the Zulu.

This new generation of leaders sought to bring in a number of modernising changes to the society they inherited. Men and women were organised into age regiments, or amabutho, essentially structuring people into work groups by



TOP Zulu wedding ceremonies continue to be a massive event

LEFT Zulu warrior traditions lasted for many years, as this 1868 image shows

Illustration Joe Cummings Images Getty Images, Wellcome Images/CC BY 4.0 (wedding)

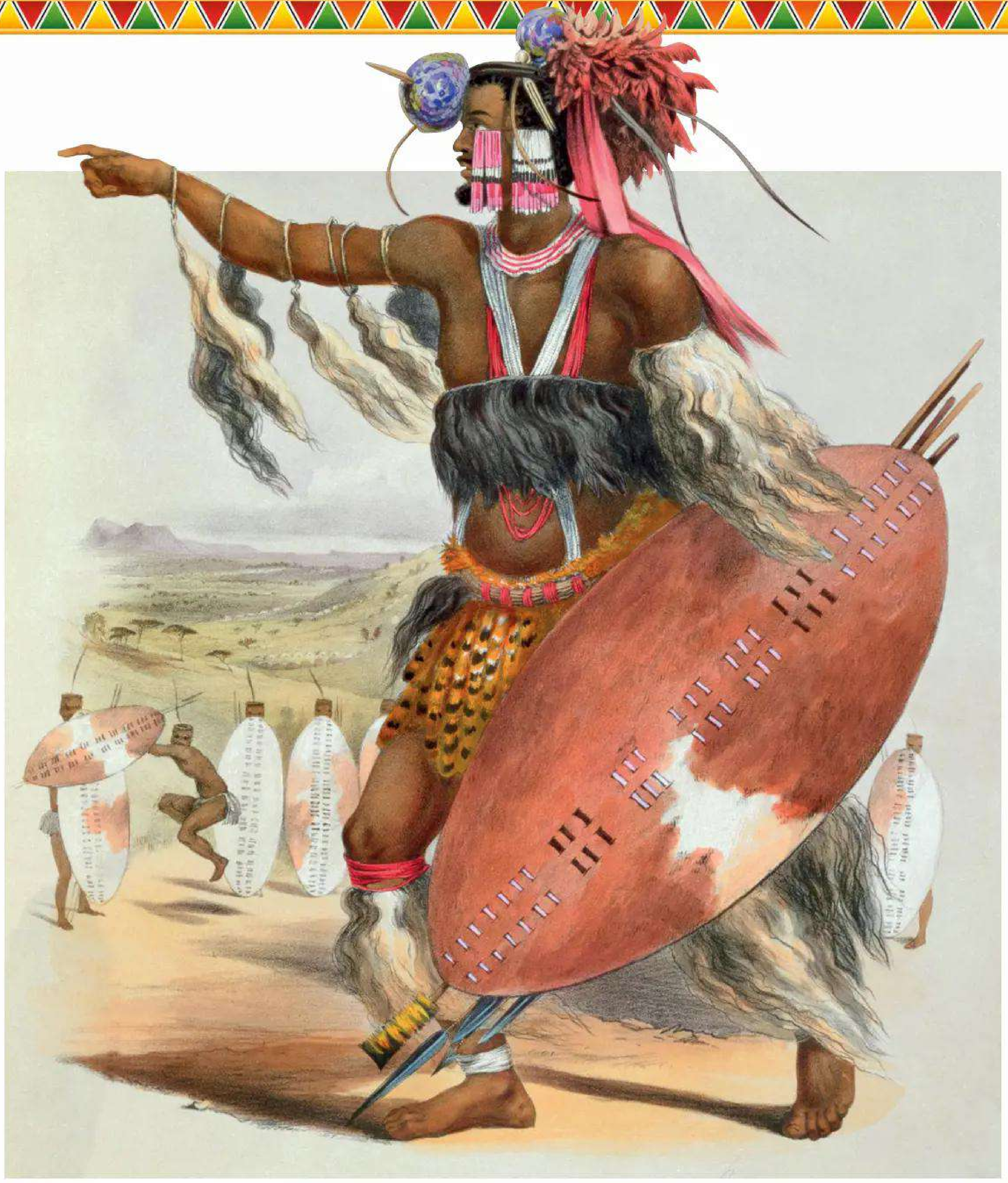
age rather than regionality. It also appears that the Mthethwa, and by extension their tributary chiefdoms like the Zulu, did away with the ritual circumcision of men to mark their transition to maturity and marked this moment instead by use of head rings. It's worth noting that some of these changes have sometimes been credited to Shaka's reign, but evidence suggests that the reforms came into effect long before his time and that his contribution was either to accelerate or expand upon them. Meanwhile, society remained driven by the family unit, which typically involved a single patriarch at its head, often with multiple wives.

A MYSTERIOUS BIRTH

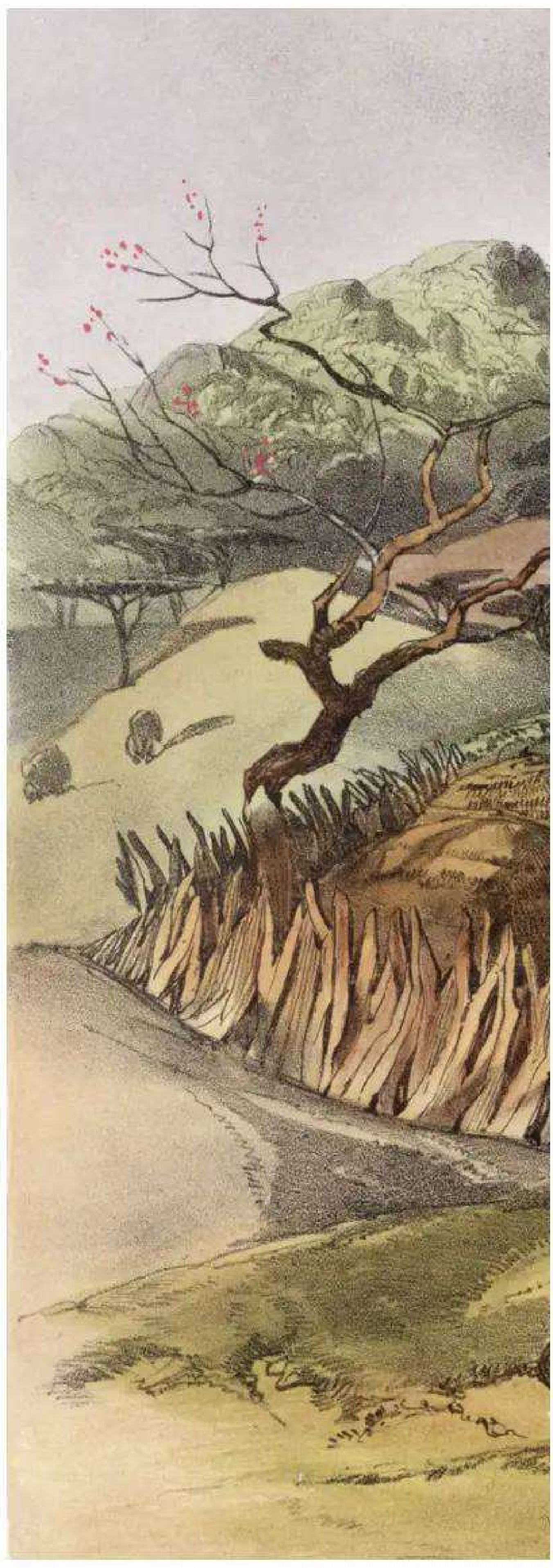
Shaka was born to Senzangakhona of the Zulu and his wife Nandi, the daughter of the Langeni chief. The how and when of his birth is still debated. Shaka's birth is commonly said to have been sometime in July 1787, but Dan Wylie in his work on Shaka estimates it was something like 1781. That would have made Shaka about 35 when he took over as chief of the Zulus. The how is more complex. Claims over Shaka's legitimacy are integral to his claim to the Zulu leadership and debunking that claim became important to many who followed him, both inside and outside the kingdom.

The most popular story is that Shaka was conceived out of wedlock. The pregnancy was hidden and blamed on itshati (a type of intestinal bug), and this is possibly where the name 'Shaka' came from. Mother and child were promptly exiled to assuage the shame and the couple never married.

However, the evidence doesn't support this tale. For a start, Nandi and Senzangakhona had at least two children together, the other being Shaka's sister Nomcoba. So, the more believable story is that Nandi was an isingodosi, or betrothed maiden, to Senzangakhona and while sex between them was prohibited before he came of age, they were permitted to be intimate with one another. The pregnancy therefore broke taboo, but merely meant that the rites needed to be rushed through and ultimately they did marry. It should also be remembered that Nandi was not Senzangakhona's only wife. In fact, he had 15 of them and at least 18 sons between them in his lifetime. In any case, Shaka's legitimacy carried enough ambiguity to allow others to fill in the gaps as they wished.



ABOVE One of Shaka's nephews, Utimuni, depicted in 1849



> *"Shaka is said to have risen quickly through the ranks of the military thanks to his intelligence and initiative"*

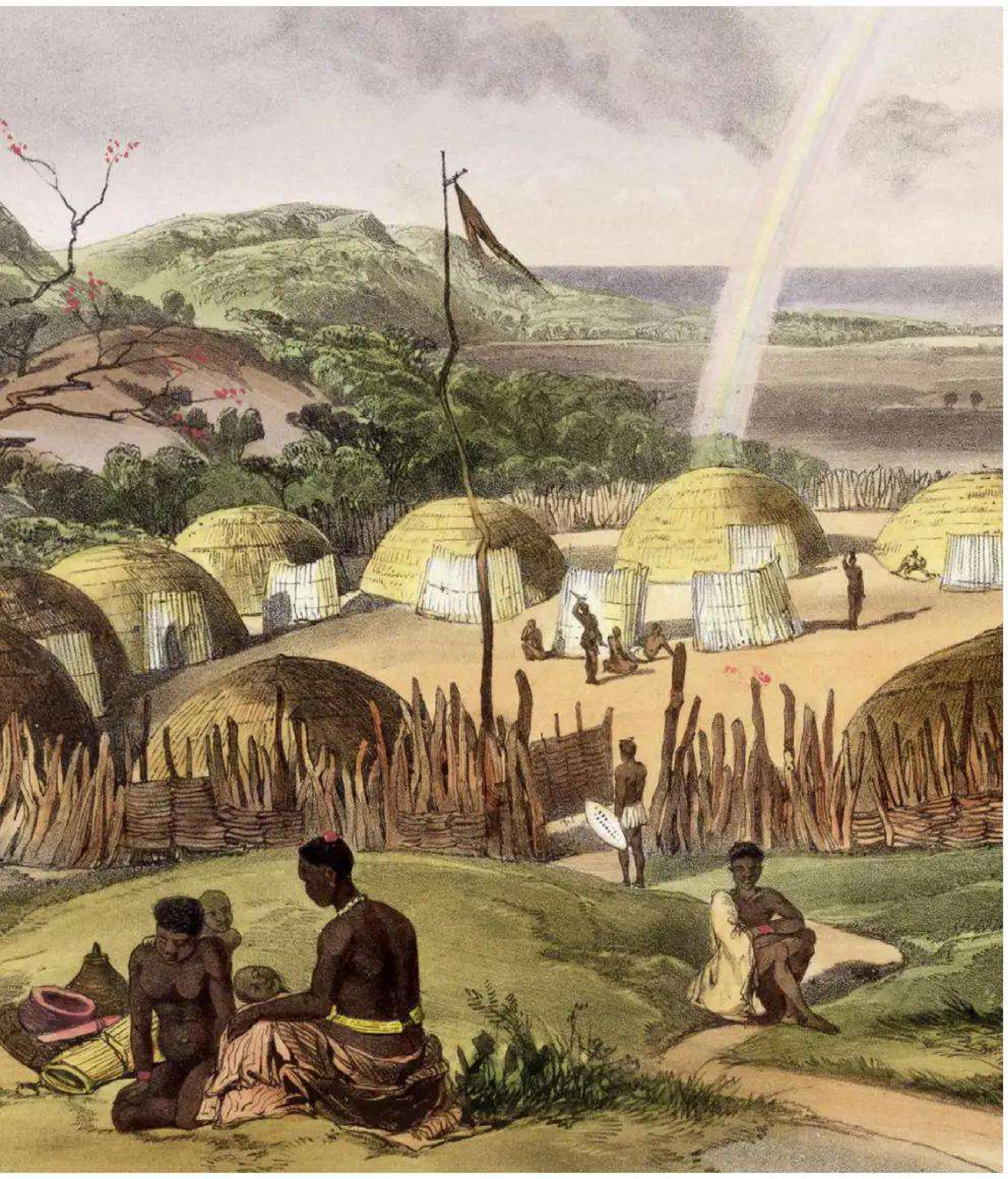
The exile portion of the story comes up repeatedly, even if the legitimacy question is put to rest. Some degree of travel between family units seems reasonable to expect and given the long distances and lack of any modern transport methods, such trips might well cover long periods of time. Still, Nandi is said to have been a fiery and strong-willed woman who had no fear of standing up to her husband, even as one of the lesser wives, and it's possible that Shaka's parents clashed frequently. Still, when he was old enough Shaka was initiated into his father's key age regiment, the iWombe ibutho, so he wasn't completely ostracised when growing up.

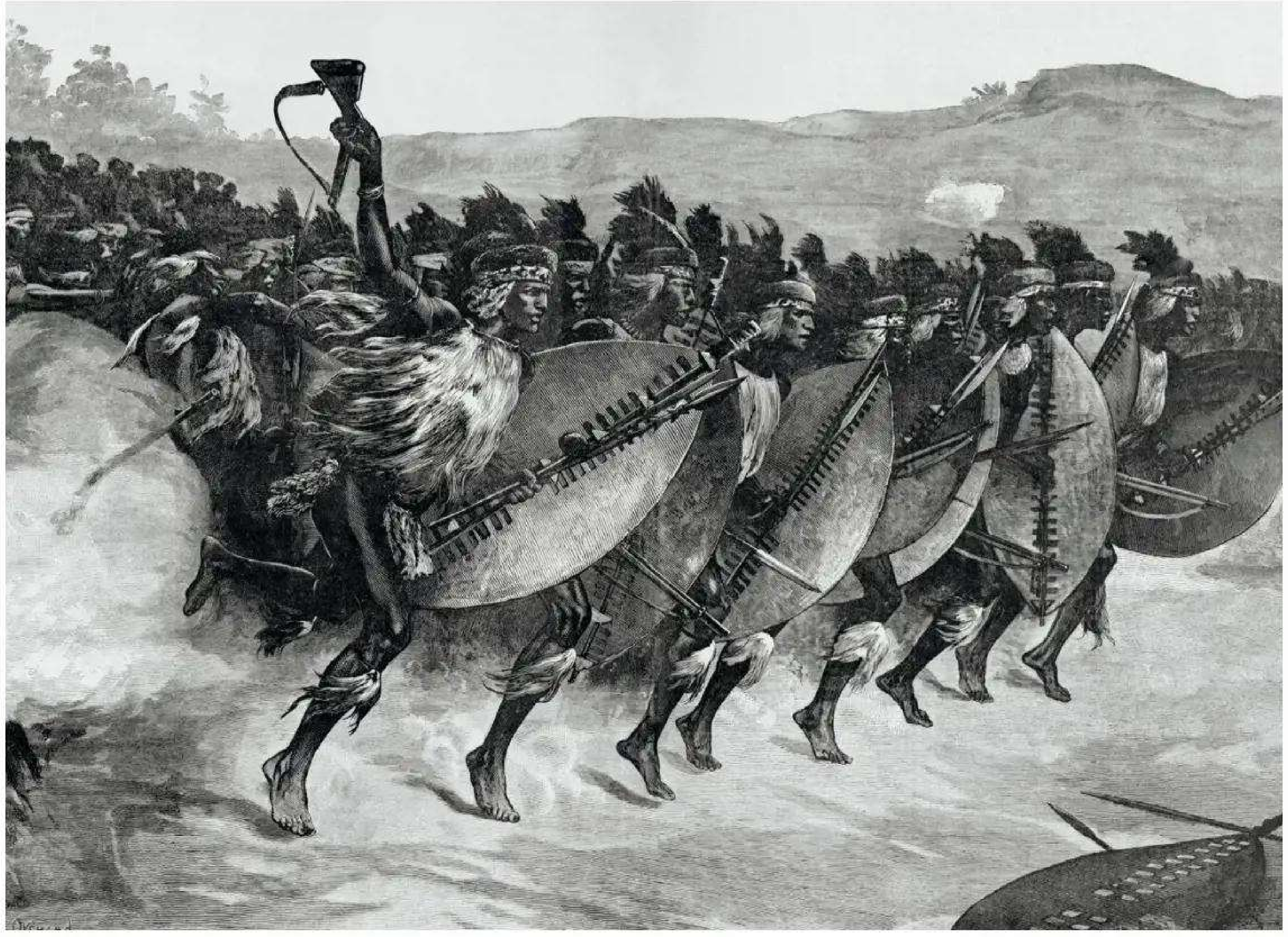
We have records of Nandi and her son leaving to live with other groups on multiple occasions, whether her own Langeni or others. Eventually, Shaka found himself with the Mthethwa, the chiefdom to whom Senzangakhona, along with around 30 other clans, paid tribute.

THE FORGING OF SHAKA

Under Dingiswayo's tutorship, Shaka grew and learned most of what would serve him in taking the Zulu chiefdom and turning it into a kingdom – arguably even an empire. Shaka is said to have risen quickly through the ranks of the military thanks to his intelligence and initiative, to become a respected general in the Mthethwa army, helping to win many victories for his chief. He was even given the honorary name, 'uSitshaka ka sitshayeki' meaning 'he who beats but is not beaten'.

Dingiswayo was one of the more progressive chiefs of the period, and it's to him that a few of Shaka's key innovations can be traced back. It was he who first moved towards age regiments rather than regional work groups, while he also took tighter control of things like marriage rites, mandating when the men of his amabutho could take a





ABOVE Relatively small homesteads with extended family units like this were the main mode of collective living, with everyone helping out with farming or hunting

TOP-RIGHT The ferocity and speed of Zulu warriors seems to have been key to their victories, as well as their use of stabbing spears

wife. Overall, Dingiswayo's leadership looks similar to Shaka's, with a mix of diplomacy, innovative thinking and occasionally brutal violence and single-mindedness. In coming to the throne, he had killed his brother and this is another lesson Shaka seems to have taken on board. He would also have taken into account the way in which placing the right ally at the head of a chiefdom could help maintain your power, as Dingiswayo did when he backed Shaka to claim the Zulu chiefdom.

Senzangakhona fell ill and died in 1816, leaving his heir Sigujana to take over the Zulu. There are many tales from the region that tell of Shaka bewitching or poisoning his father, but the details are unclear. Sigujana was only a little younger than Shaka but belonged to his father's senior and eighth wife, Bhibhi. As his first-born son, however, Shaka had a strong claim to take his place and was backed by Dingiswayo. A plot appears to have been hatched in concert with another son of Senzangakhona named Ngwadi. Having brought Sigujana into his confidence, Ngwadi killed his half-brother while he bathed in the river and sent word to Shaka to return to their father's capital of Siklebheni.

FROM CHIEF TO KING

What's the difference between a chief and a king? It's a bit semantic, but the key difference between Shaka's role and his father's is that Shaka ended up at the head of the chiefdom pyramid, and arranged what might previously have been a loose confederacy into a much more organised state.

Shaka moved closer to having a full-time standing military force, making it central to his political and social structure. They had regular military training and were sent out on frequent raids to intimidate unruly tribes and take cattle from them, maintaining a base level of fear of their king's wrath. These warriors lived in their own barracks and there was a strict prohibition on marriage without the king's authority. Shaka never took a wife, which fuelled speculation about his sexuality or impotence, but his homestead was full of women and there's evidence he fathered children. This led to stories that he killed women who became pregnant by him, but again, such stories may have been politically motivated.

Women generally were a massive part of Shaka's political structure in the years to come. Nandi, his mother, was now queen mother and in charge of all palace household affairs, making her very influential. Contrary to her earlier reputation, she is said to have been a calming voice in the ear of the young leader. The other women in his family, his aunts and his father's many other wives, became the heads of other chiefdoms, acting as his political emissaries.

However, it was early in Shaka's time as chief that his benefactor, Dingiswayo, was captured and killed by a long-time rival, Zwide of the Ndwandwe. This was a massive blow, because Dingiswayo had backed his claim with the Zulu and had been an important influence on him going into adulthood. Shaka refused to yield to Zwide and stood his ground, giving Shaka the first big chance to prove his leadership to his people and to implement some of his more profound tactical changes.

Zwide is thought to have attacked with perhaps more than twice as many men as Shaka was able to muster, and yet the Zulu beat back their enemy on several occasions, each time retreating back to safer land, rebuilding and training. A key tactical change came about through a change in primary weapons for the Zulu. At this point, throwing spears, or assegai, were common, but Shaka moved his men to using a 60-centimetre (two-foot), long-bladed single-handed spear called an iklwa. Combined with their isihlangu shields, Zulu warriors would knock the enemy off balance with a shield strike and then stab them in the midriff. It was a vicious method of fighting, and combined with their bull-horn formation that would encircle the enemy, it's easy to see why Shaka built a reputation as a particularly ruthless and bloody military leader. Interestingly, despite this effective fighting style, there was seen to be a cost to the warriors in fighting this way, and it was important for returning soldiers to undergo ancient cleansing traditions to rid them of an umnyama, or dark omen.

Images Getty Images

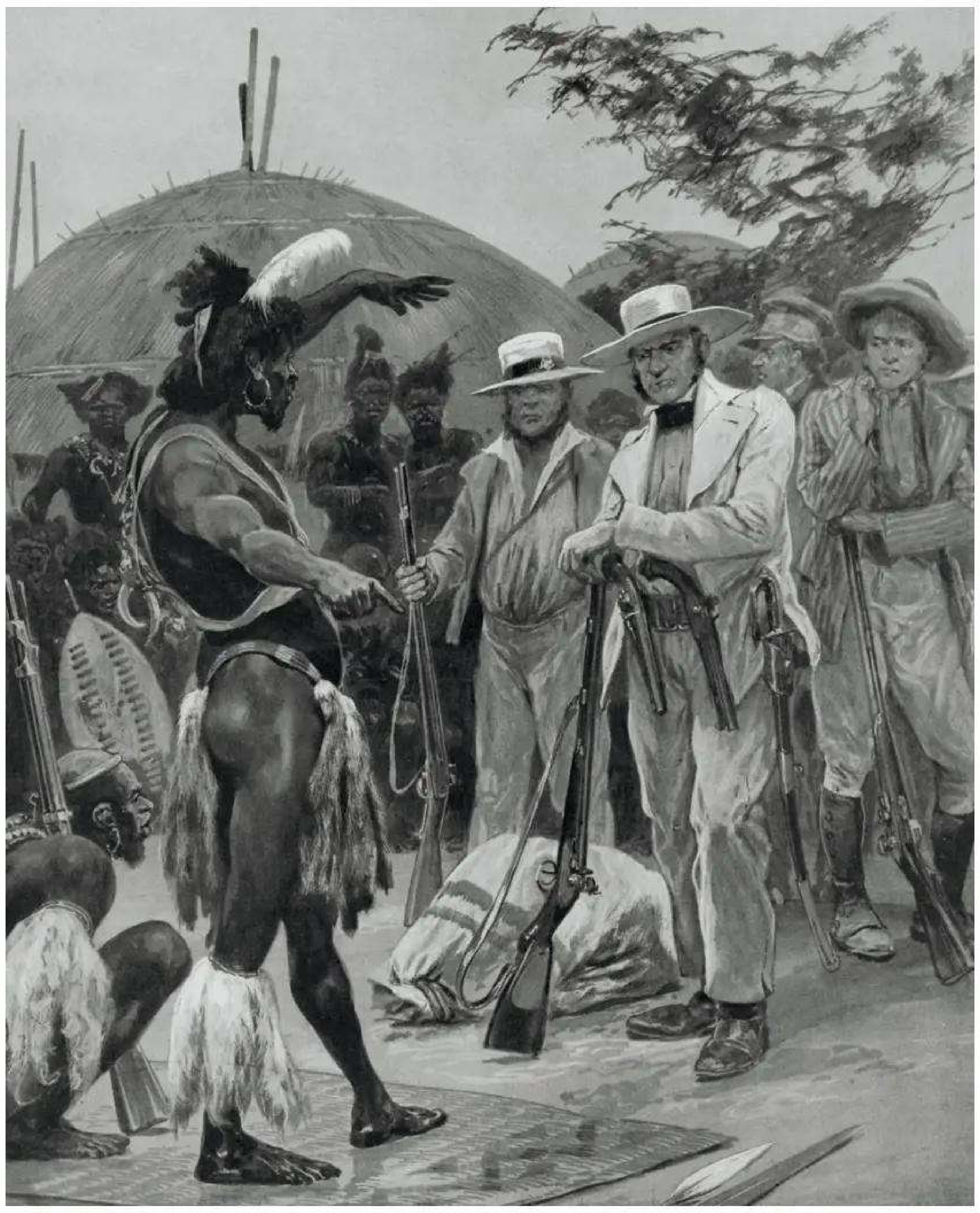
RIGHT Photos from years after Shaka's reign show how the traditional ceremonies and rights continued to be integral to the kingdom

MIDDLE-RIGHT The ox-hide shields of the Zulu have become an iconic symbol of the people

Ceremonies for this cleansing could last four days before they could finally meet with the king, at which time the battle would be reviewed and honours handed out. Poor performance or cowardice could be punished by execution.

When Zwide's army attacked on their third assault in 1819, Shaka's forces retreated into the Nkandla mountains, using the difficult terrain to even out the fight against the superior Ndwandwe numbers. Having routed them, Shaka moved his men back across the Black Mfolozi in a surprise advance into Zwide's territory and forced them into retreat. Any defeat for a ruler in this region and era could be seen as delegitimising their right to rule. Defeat brought great shame upon Zwide and some of the smaller chiefdoms who had formerly paid tribute to him began breaking away. Some, but not all, turned to Shaka and the Zulu, who now inherited much of the Mthethwa region as theirs as well.

As mentioned earlier, some of these chiefdoms were given overseers in the form of members of the royal family, and others might be allowed a certain amount of autonomy (especially if they were on the outskirts of Zulu territory). But Shaka was not averse to doing as much as his mentor had done for him and had chiefs assassinated in favour of more agreeable heirs to their lands.



BELOW Farewell's arrival and establishment of Port Natal offered Shaka the trade link to Europe that he hoped would secure his legacy

A good example of this is the Qwabe, who were another large power on the coast and seemed to be growing again. It's possible Shaka and their chief, Phakathwayo, had known each other in their youth and fought often, building a substantial enmity. Either way, the Zulu were victorious over the Qwabe at Hlokohloko Ridge, capturing Phakathwayo and executing him. The rest of the Qwabe submitted to Shaka, and Phakathwayo's half-brother Nqetho was brought out of exile to take his place. But the Qwabe remained a threat, whether real or imagined, since Shaka would blame them for an assassination attempt on him some years later.

TRADE & TRAGEDY

With his greatest adversaries dead or in retreat, Shaka went about building his kingdom into something that would last for the next 60 years, relying on regular raids and intimidation to maintain order, as well as strategic placing of family. To avoid the fate of Zwide he also needed to keep winning victories and he apparently worried about seeming old, plucking out the white hairs that emerged on his head. A defeat of Zulu forces by the Mpondo in 1824 was the first sign that Shaka's rule might crack.

Still, matters of justice were decided by Shaka, not local chiefs, as were diplomatic relations with those outside the Nguni-speaking world. When traders landed on Zulu land in a bay they named Port Natal, Shaka saw the opportunity he'd been waiting for. The Cape Colony to the south had been established by the British in 1814 and he had long wished to establish a trade route with them, but was blocked by the distance and rival tribes in his way. The arrival of Lieutenant Francis George Farewell and Henry Francis Flynn to his kingdom in June 1824 could be the diplomatic opening he needed to enrich his kingdom far beyond anything his forebears had achieved.

Shaka granted them an audience, allowed them the right to stay in the bay, and almost like another small chiefdom they remained under his ultimate rule. Still, the situation was unsettled and later that year there was an attempt on Shaka's life by assassins. While he blamed the Qwabe, it's said that he suspected his half-brothers Dingane and Mhlangana. He sent forces to crush any embers of Qwabe resistance and chase down possible suspects. He even took the step of moving his capital into Qwabe territory to stamp his authority on them. Meanwhile, the Ndwandwe were building in strength once again under the leadership of Zwide's son, Sikhunyana. Shaka personally led an attack in October 1826, backed by some of the white settlers, and achieved a comprehensive victory, followed by the slaughter of many of the civilians. The Ndwandwe did not rise again, with survivors swearing allegiance to the Zulu or scattering to other chiefdoms.

ABOVE The 1986 TV series *Shaka Zulu*, starring Henry Cele in the title role, is one of the most iconic depictions of the Zulu king, although not necessarily one of the most accurate

Shaka hoped that trade through Port Natal and possibly the introduction of firearms into his army would be the path to more sustainable power. In 1827 he chose James Saunders King, the leader of a group that had shipwrecked in 1825, to lead his embassy to the Cape Colony. But then his mother, Nandi, died.

Shaka's downfall started to accelerate from here and we can be fairly confident of this because the stories about his behaviour, genuine or not, become more extreme. It was suggested by leaders that succeeded him that he killed Nandi, perhaps in a rage that she had hidden a son he had fathered, but we do know that a period of mourning was established and he directed his rage at the Qwabe again. Further stories claim he ordered all pregnant women and their husbands to be killed, but it does seem his chief advisor, Ngomane kaMqomboli, forbade harvesting or milking for a year, which was a rather impractical measure.

The trader and explorer Nathaniel Isaacs tells us that Shaka saw things were getting out of hand in the wake of Nandi's death and doubled his efforts to secure a partnership with the British. James King's embassy in early 1828 had failed as he tried to convince the British to take control of Port Natal, circumventing Shaka's authority, and this confused the matter. Shaka's attack on the Mpondo immediately to the colony's north likely didn't ease the growing tensions. The final stage of mourning required a war to cast out the umnyama and they were the perhaps inopportune targets. However, a second embassy was arranged in September, this time led by members of the original traders and a man named John Cane. Alas, while Cane was successful and a treaty was prepared, Shaka would be assassinated before it could arrive.

THE LAST DAYS

Shaka ordered another campaign, this time heading north against the Gaza kingdom. Already an unpopular move so soon after a campaign heading south, it was disastrous, with his army decimated by malaria and dysentery before they even reached the enemy. Forced to withdraw, this humiliation was all that Shaka's enemies needed to see an opening. As he suspected, his brothers Dingane and Mhlangana were plotting against him and set aside their rivalry to succeed Shaka to first depose him. Shaka's aunt, Mkabayi, who had helped his ascension, now backed this coup as well, perhaps blaming Shaka for Nandi's death. They were also backed by one of his advisors, Mbopha.

> *"This humiliation was all Shaka's enemies needed to see an opening"*

On 23 or 24 September 1828, Shaka was killed by his brothers as he sat in his personal quarters. Mbopha created a distraction, scattering the women and attendants around the king, and then one or all of the three men stabbed him. It's said that his last words were, "What is the matter my father's children?". Ultimately Dingane would emerge as king, turning on Mhlangana as well.

So, who was the real Shaka? To this day, the Zulu nation is said to have been 'born out of Shaka's spear' and that description seems accurate. War and bloodshed were never far from his thoughts, but he may not have been the crazed murderer later tales made him out to be. He was capable of incredible cruelty and violence, but it would be fair to say no kingdoms in history have been built on anything less. The fact that he is surrounded by so much myth makes him all the more intriguing, and the nation he left behind so unique.

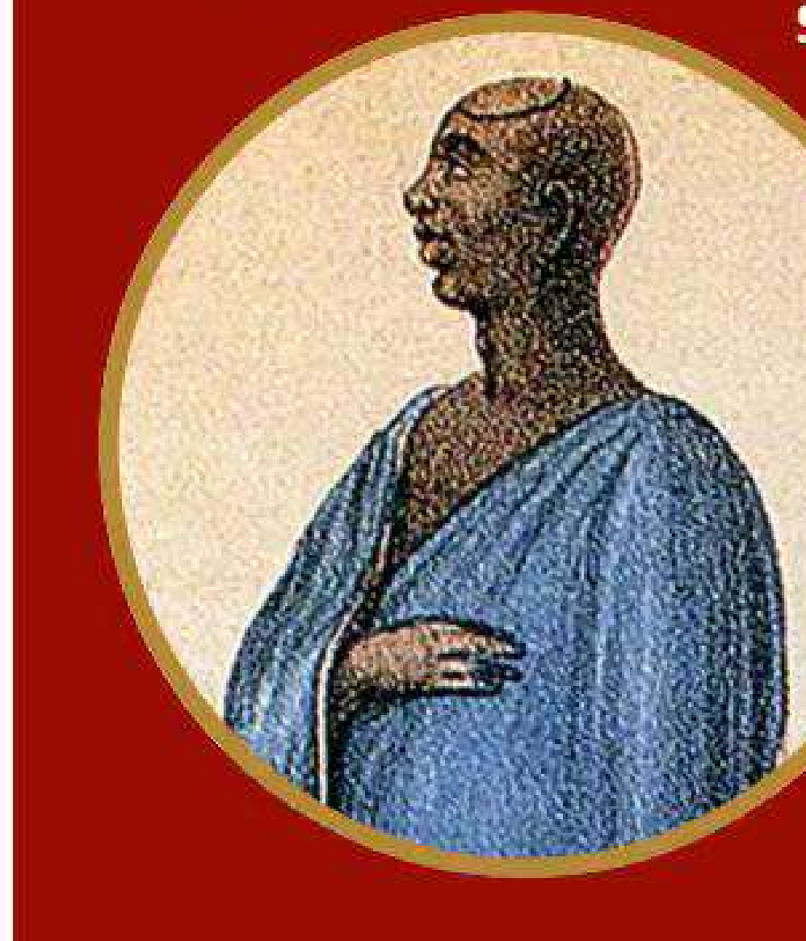
THE ZULU SUCCESSORS

How the house of Senzangakhona continued

DINGANE

Reign 1828-1840

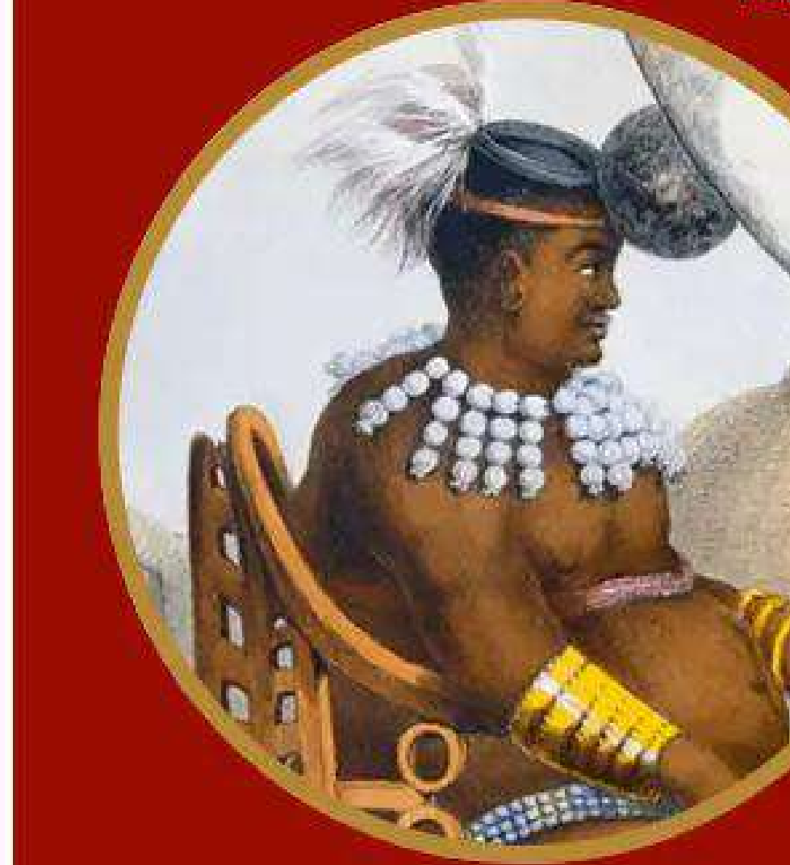
The son of Senzangakhona's sixth wife and half-brother of Shaka conspired to kill the Zulu king and take his place with the help of some of his other half-brothers. Without Shaka in charge, however, some of the small communities on the outer edges of the kingdom began breaking away. Dingane was ultimately killed by his brother Mpande, who then took over.



MPANDE

Reign 1840-1872

With the support of the Boers, Mpande looked to overthrow his brother in 1840. He was the son of Senzangakhona's ninth wife and may have been persuaded to seek the throne against his better judgement. As it was his son, Cetshwayo, would end up doing most of the heavy lifting of ruling after he defeated his brother to gain supremacy within the family.



CETSHWAYO

Reign 1873-1879

Son of Mpande and grandson of Senzangakhona, Cetshwayo was the last king of an independent Zulu kingdom. He defeated and killed his younger brother Mbuyazi, who was his father's favourite, to secure his path to the throne in 1856 and was more or less in charge from that point. His reign ended with defeat in the Anglo-Zulu War, after which he was exiled.

Images Getty Images, Alamy, New York Public Library (leopard costume, ox-hide shields), wiki PD/Allen Francis Gardiner (Dingane), wiki PD/The Kings of the Zulu (Mpande), wiki PD/Frances Ellen Colenso (Cetshwayo)

Japan, 1867-1912

EMPEROR MEIJI

The enlightened emperor who dragged Japan into the modern world

Words **Scott Reeves**

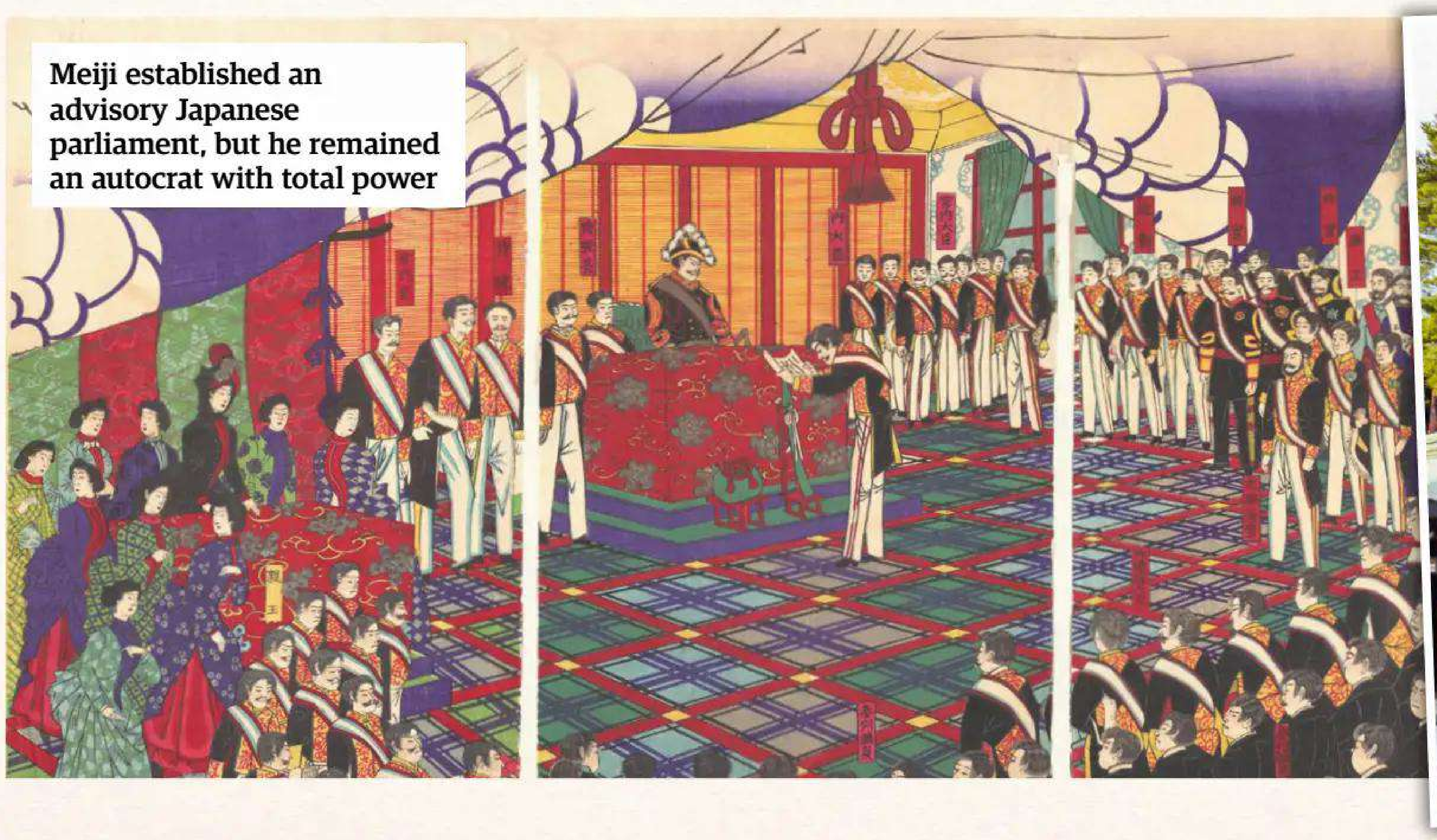
Japanese emperors are traditionally named only after their death to allow their title to reflect the era in which they sat on the throne. The emperor who was born Mutsuhito is now known as Emperor Meiji, from the Japanese word for 'enlightened rule', and few historians disagree with the posthumous label.

When Prince Mutsuhito was born, the imperial family was little more than a figurehead in a nation ruled by the shogunate. When Mutsuhito was nine months old, the appearance of an American fleet in Edo harbour spurred panic in the isolationist country. The shogun, unsure of how to respond to the outside world, broke with convention and consulted with the emperor about what to do. The result of the American negotiations was a tense relationship with the rest of the world, in addition to growing unrest between the isolationists and their opponents within Japan. When Prince Mutsuhito became emperor at the age of 16, he chose to embrace the outside world. Amid a background of civil unrest against an increasingly unpopular shogun, Meiji let it be known that he wanted to rule rather than be a figurehead.

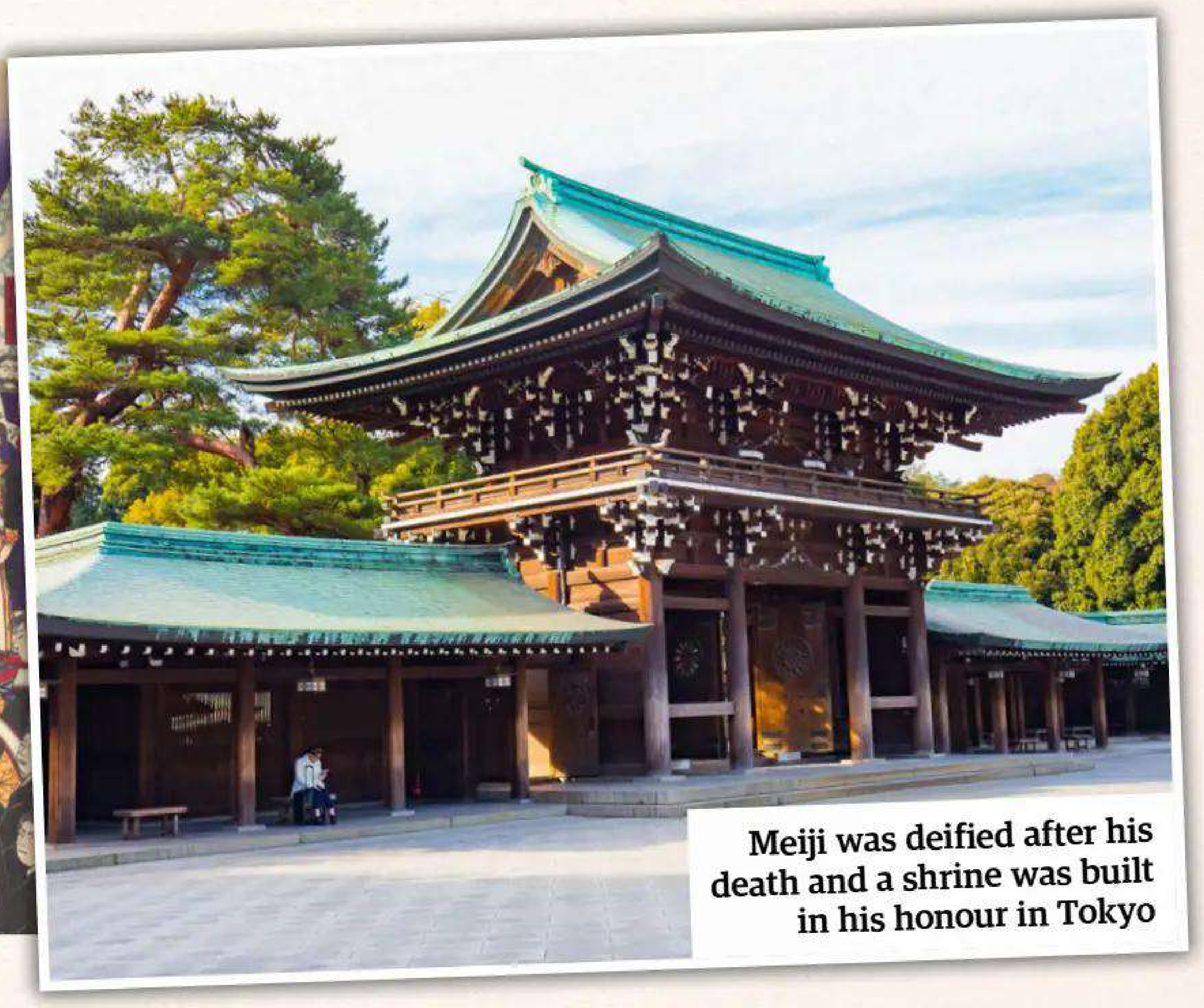
> *"Meiji dismantled the old feudal system of government"*

With few options at the shogun's disposal, he relinquished his power to the emperor. Over the next few years, Meiji dismantled the old feudal system of government, stripping the privileges of the daimyo and samurai classes. In their place, Meiji established a modern system of administration in a process that became known as the Meiji Restoration. Emperor Meiji symbolised the new era by moving the capital from Kyoto to Edo, which he renamed Tokyo. The Japanese language was standardised, land was redistributed, and a national system of public schools was created. Foreign experts were brought in to rapidly industrialise Japan.

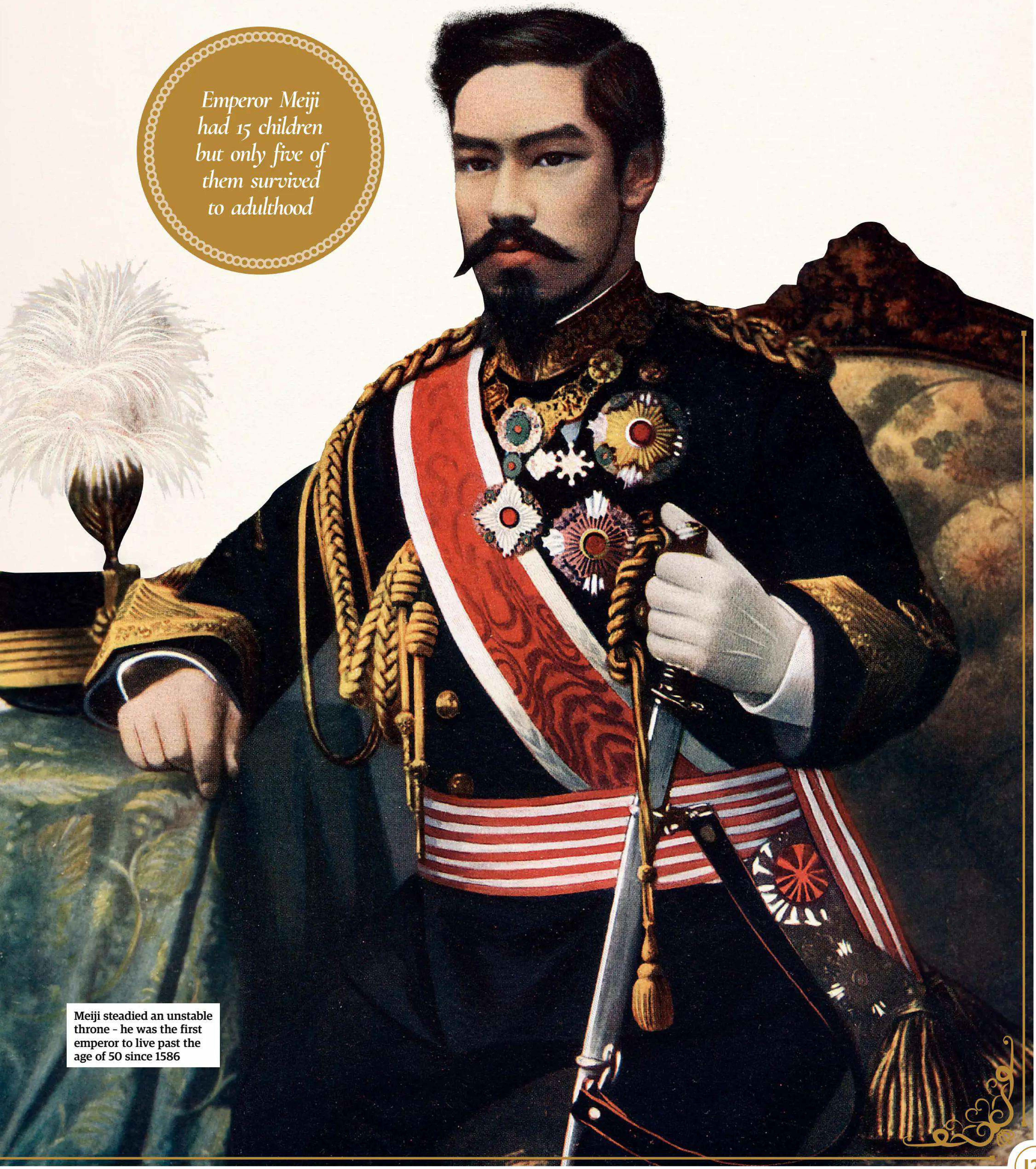
Two years after Meiji died, Japan was sufficiently engaged in world affairs that it entered WWI. Thanks to a new-found military power that developed under Meiji, Japan seized German colonies in Asia with relatively little effort, and Meiji's legacy helped his nation to establish itself as the region's greatest power.



Meiji established an advisory Japanese parliament, but he remained an autocrat with total power



Meiji was deified after his death and a shrine was built in his honour in Tokyo



Emperor Meiji had 15 children but only five of them survived to adulthood

Meiji steadied an unstable throne - he was the first emperor to live past the age of 50 since 1586

Great Britain, 1936-52

GEORGE VI

The life and reign of Britain's reluctant king

Words **Jessica Leggett**

George, the second son of King George V and Queen Mary, ascended to the throne unexpectedly after his brother, King Edward VIII, abdicated. Edward had chosen to give up his throne in order to marry Wallis Simpson, a twice-divorced American, leaving his brother to assume the crown.

A shy man with a stutter that hindered his public speaking, George was worried about his ability to be king. Nevertheless, he was determined to carry out his duties and he had the steadfast support of his wife, Queen Elizabeth, with whom he had two daughters: Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret.

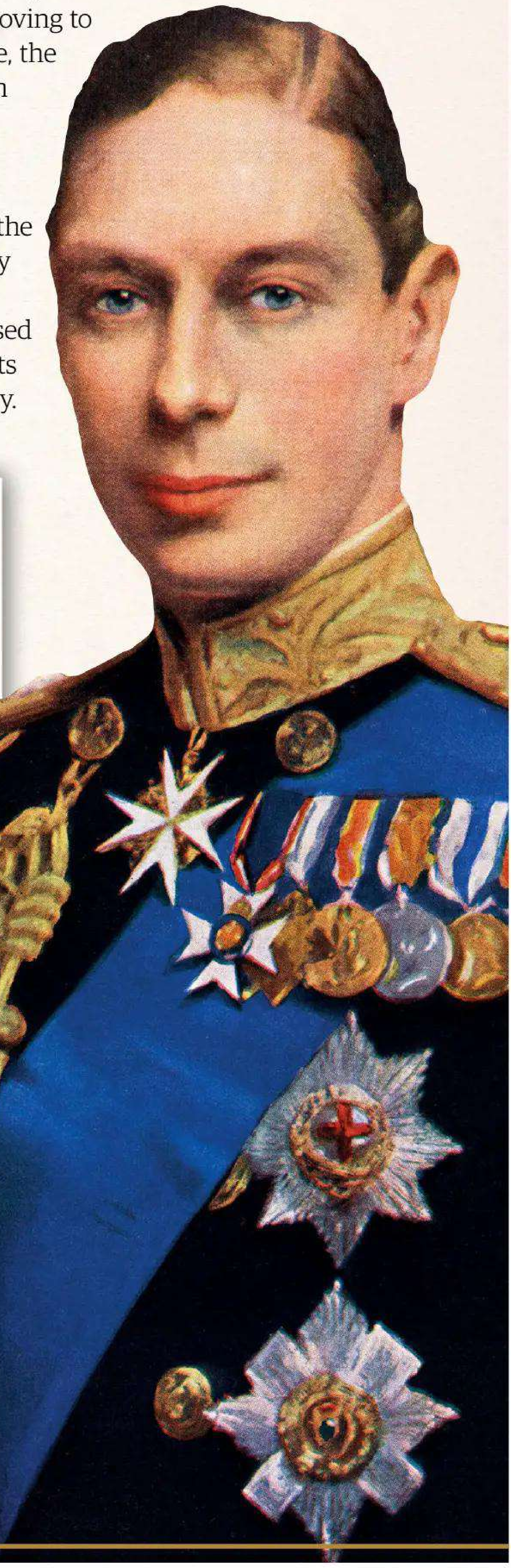
After his brother's abdication, George's first task was to restore trust in the monarchy. Despite the fact that his birth name was Albert and he was fondly known as 'Bertie' by his loved ones, the new king chose the regnal name George to emphasise continuity with his father's reign. On 12 May 1937, the day originally set aside for Edward's coronation, he was crowned at Westminster Abbey.

The king and queen paid a state visit to the United States and Canada in May and June 1939. It was the first visit to the United States by a British monarch, and the royal couple developed a close relationship with President Franklin D Roosevelt.

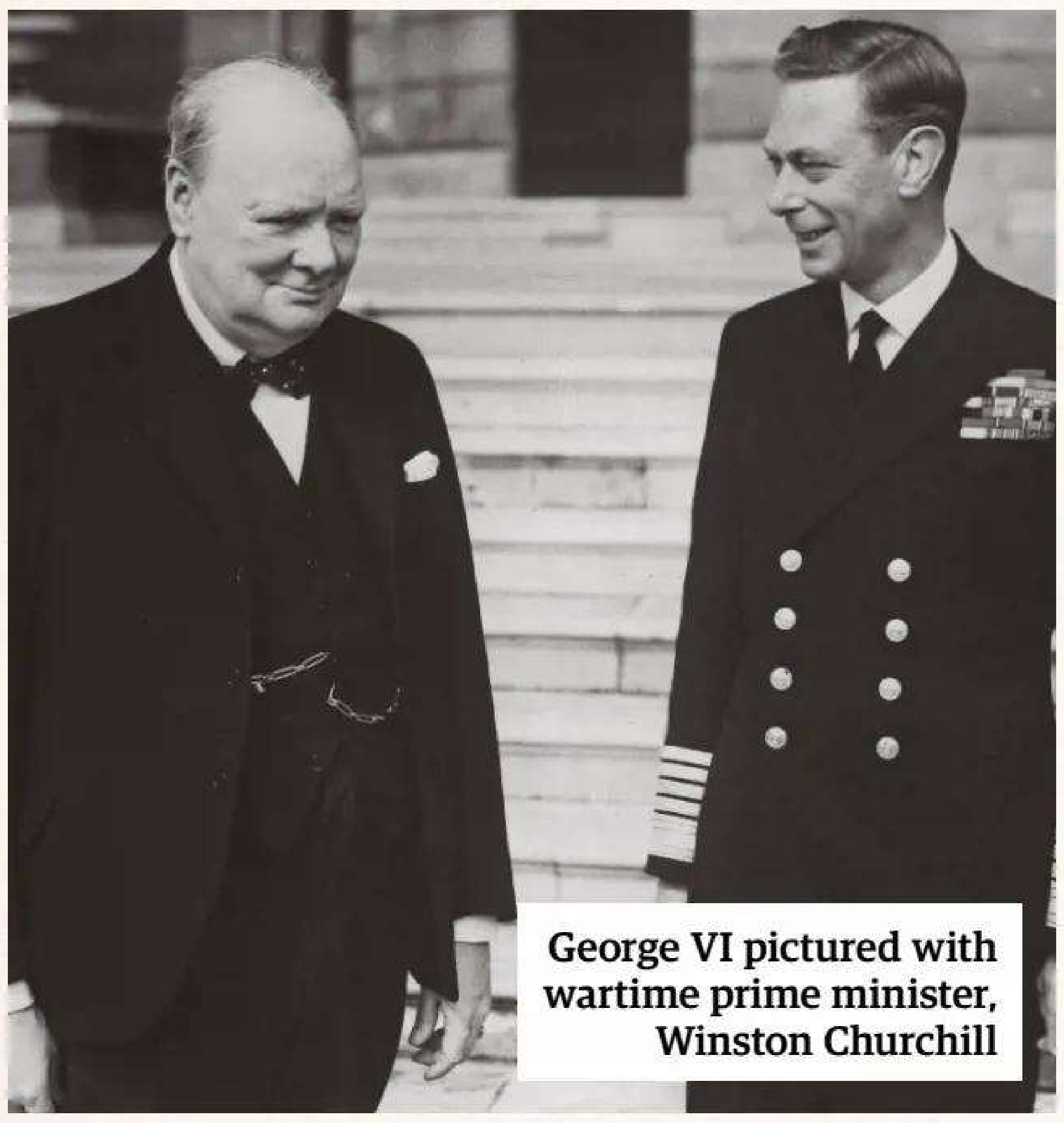
In his role as a constitutional monarch, George supported Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and his appeasement of Adolf Hitler. However, after Germany invaded Poland in September, World War II erupted across Europe. Rather than moving to Canada for their safety, George and Elizabeth chose to remain in the United Kingdom throughout the war and encourage unity for the war effort across the country.

Instead of moving to the countryside, the king and queen remained in residence at Buckingham Palace despite the threat of enemy bombing, and they were praised by their subjects for their bravery.

George VI with his family on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, shortly after being crowned king



King George VI, wearing his uniform as Admiral of the Fleet



George VI pictured with wartime prime minister, Winston Churchill

The royal couple narrowly escaped death when the palace courtyard was bombed during the Blitz, while they were present.

George and Elizabeth paid several visits to heavily bombed areas across the country, as well as to munition factories and troops, echoing King George V's actions three decades earlier. The king also overcame his speech impediment to deliver several inspiring speeches throughout the conflict.

George was keen to visit his troops and boost their morale when possible, as he had served in the Navy during World War I. In 1939, he visited troops in France, in North Africa in 1943, on the beaches of Normandy following the D-Day landings in 1944, and in Italy and the Low Countries. He also established the George Cross and the George Medal in 1940 to honour acts of extraordinary civilian bravery.

Before becoming king, George served in both the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force

Victory in Europe (VE) Day celebrations were held across the country after Germany and its allies surrendered in May 1945. In front of the cheering crowds, George and the royal family appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. The king also invited Winston Churchill, with whom he had developed a close friendship during the war, to join them on the balcony.

Following the war, the British Empire began to disintegrate, with many territories declaring independence. In 1947, British India was partitioned into two independent countries, India and Pakistan, and George relinquished his title of emperor of India.

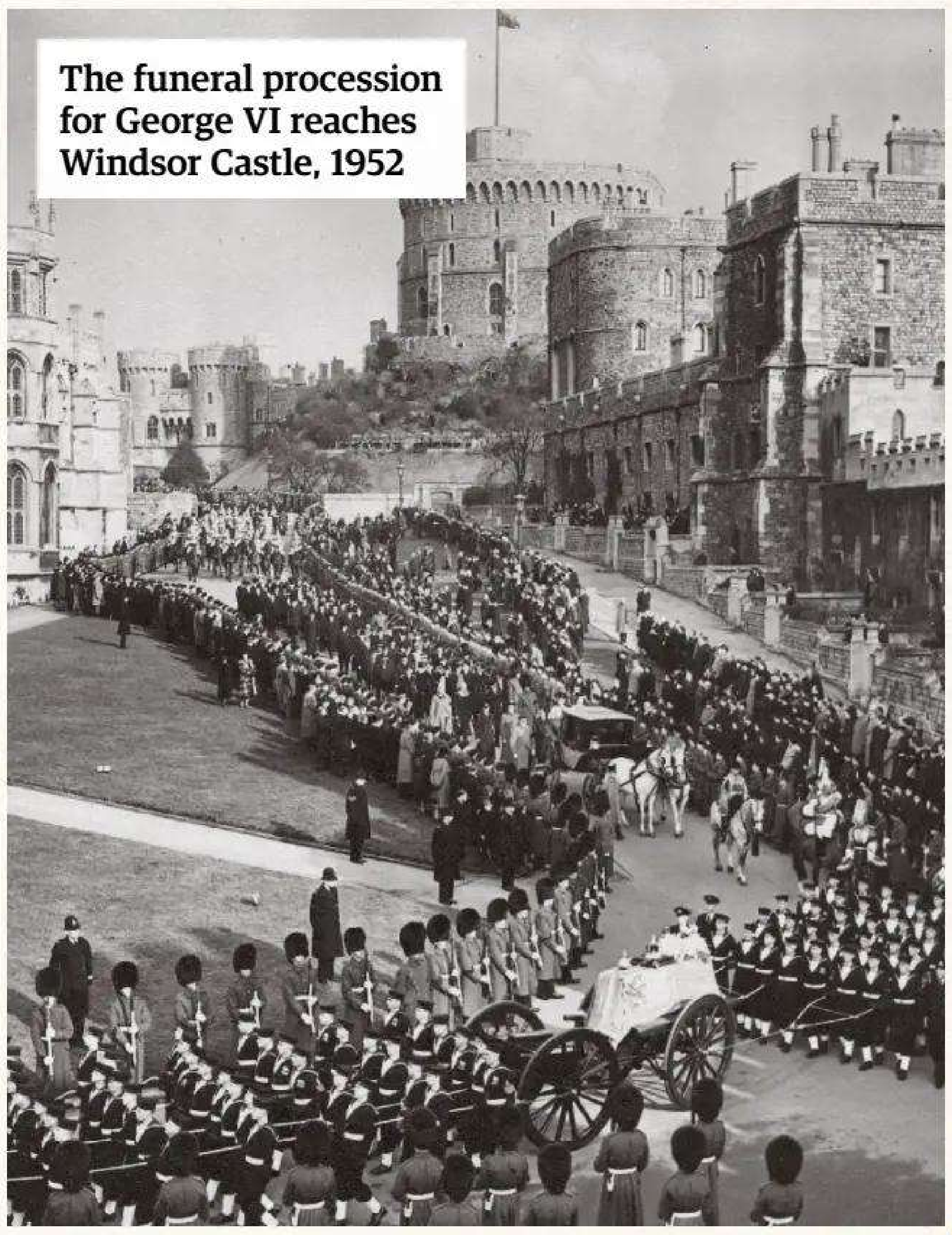
Many of these former territories, however, agreed to join the Commonwealth, and George was formally appointed as the head of the Commonwealth nations in 1949.

The stress of World War II and the post-war years, coupled with George's heavy smoking habit, exacerbated his poor health. As the king's health increasingly declined his daughter and heir, Princess Elizabeth, began to take on a lot more responsibility to support her father. In September 1951, the king underwent surgery to remove his entire left lung after a malignant tumour was found.

George never fully recovered from the drastic operation. On 31 January 1952, he watched his daughter and her husband, Prince Philip, as they left London airport to embark on a tour of Australia and New Zealand, via Kenya, on his behalf. It was the last time the king would be seen in public, as he died in his sleep at Sandringham on 5 February at the age of 56. His funeral was held ten days later at St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle.

George experienced more turmoil in his short 15 years as king than most monarchs ever do over decades of reign. However, dutiful until the end and beloved by his subjects, George's reign provided much-needed stability for both Britain and the monarchy following the abdication of his brother.

From left to right: a young Prince Charles, Queen Elizabeth, Princess Margaret, Prince Philip, King George VI, Princess Elizabeth and baby Princess Anne



The funeral procession for George VI reaches Windsor Castle, 1952

THE GREAT BOOK OF KINGS

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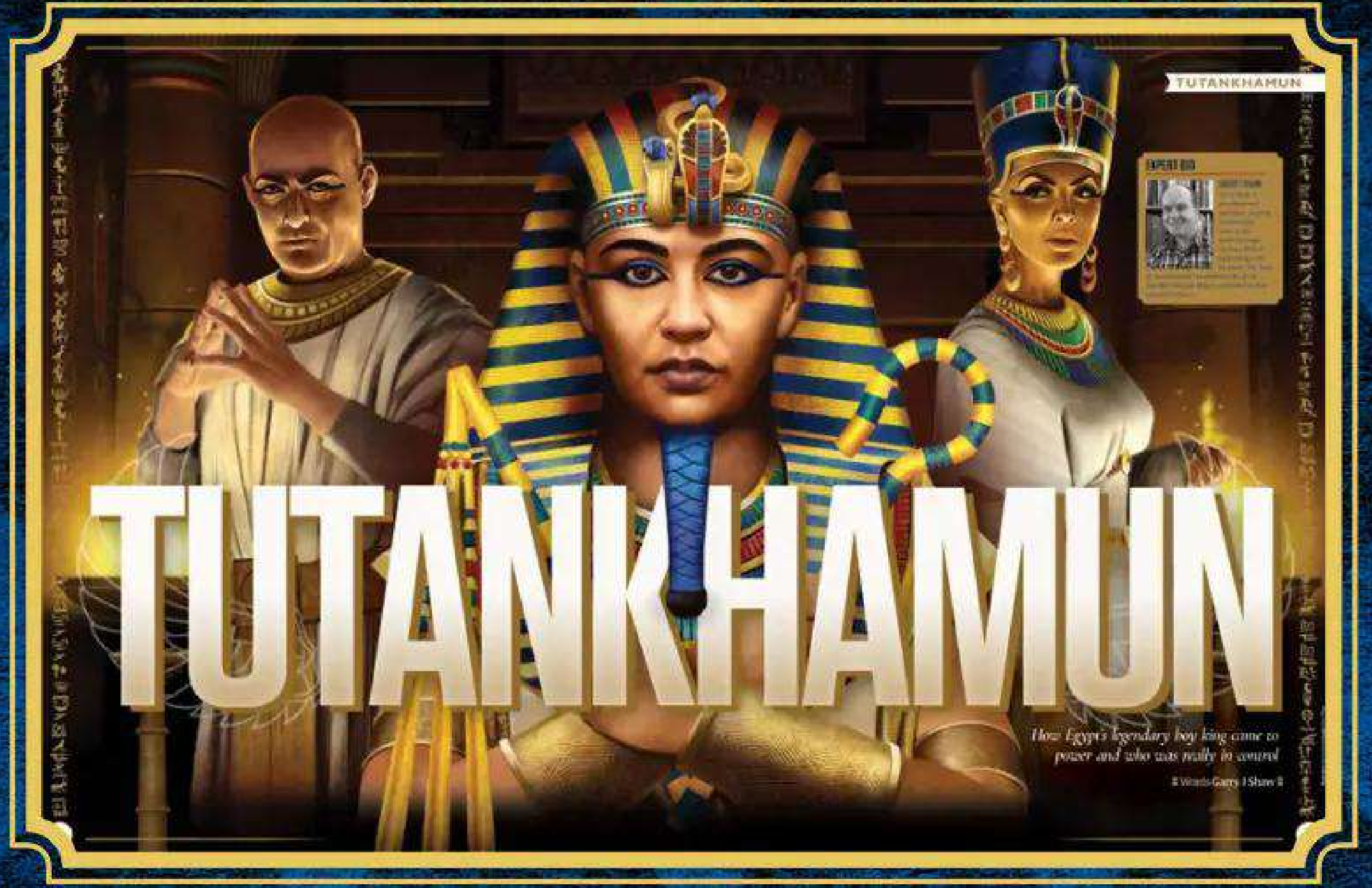
THE STORIES BEHIND THE MEN WHO HAVE SHAPED HISTORY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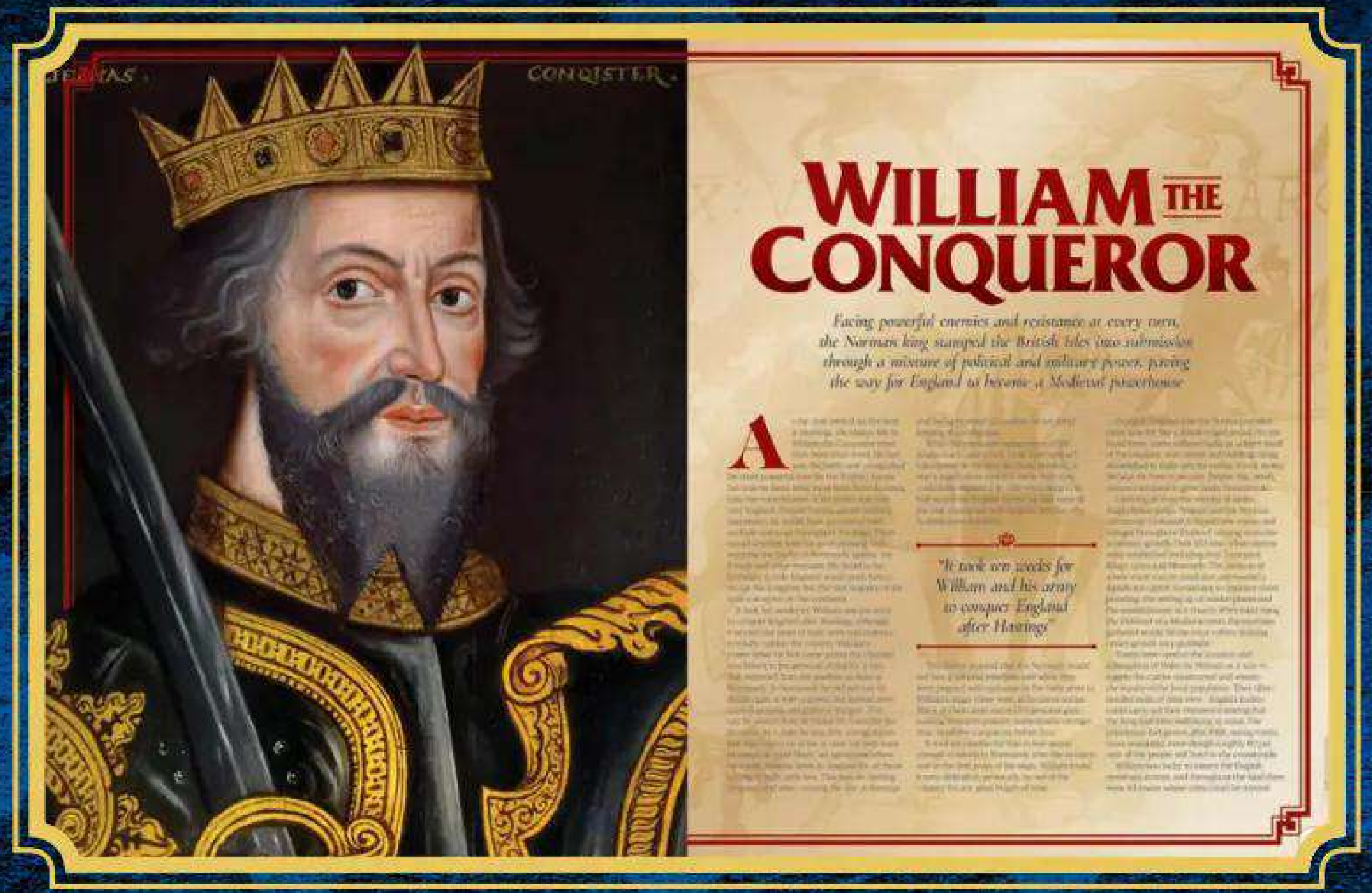
Uncover the stories of history's most famous kings


WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

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